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Turning (in)to the Triple Threat

An Auto/Ethnographic Journey through Pedagogy, Discourse, Documentation and Embodied Experience in ArtsEd's Musical Theatre Training Process

Turning (in)to the Triple Threat:
An Auto/Ethnographic Journey through Pedagogy, Discourse, Documentation and Embodied Experience in ArtsEd's Musical Theatre Training Process

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Abstract

To become a successful, professional triple threat practitioner is the ambition of many young musical theatre performers. Vocational musical theatre training and, more specifically, triple threat training programmes promise the possibility of achieving this aim. However, despite this centrality to the ambitions of trainees, the process of training the triple threat and the training experience have been mostly overlooked by scholars. Employing an interdisciplinary methodology and a crystallized framework (Ellingson, 2009), I synthesise ethnography, autoethnography and practice as research to present an extended case study of the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course at ArtsEd, London. This approach allows me to build on existing scholarly depictions of the triple threat, addressing the significance of training as an intensive process of enculturation and drawing important conclusions about what I call the 'performer-training-industry loop'.

Chapter 1 considers the conceptualisation of the triple threat and distinguishes the triple threat performer and triple threat training, evidencing a lack of specificity in how the term is defined. The triple threat performer, and their training, are considered under three conceptual themes: stigmatisation; separation; and discourse. Chapter 2 explores how the ArtsEd training culture forms and is formed by its intense sensorial environment which conditions the trainee in preparation for the musical theatre industry. I analyse particularities of the sonic and visual environment before delineating prominent sociocultural and sensory norms to develop a sensory profile for the ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course. Chapter 3 considers how creativity functions in the triple threat training process. I explore how the inception of the megamusical can be recognised to have impacted the performer's practice, giving rise to the problematic, exclusionary term of the 'creative', before discussing dimensions of training through which creativity can be realised. Examining training ethics, Chapter 4 considers the high stakes nature of the audition process and how this is reflected in training through the trainee's embodiment of aesthetic labour and vulnerability, before evidencing a pedagogical paradigm shift at ArtsEd stimulating a more holistic approach. Positioned alongside the four chapters, connecting past and present training experiences, the multigenre, multimedia *Curated Interfaces* punctuate the thesis. Using multiple modes of representation, I aim to enable a deeper understanding of the complexities of the performer's labour and the training process in context, drawing conclusions not only about training's formative effects but as to how this thesis might function as an archival document which contributes to musical theatre training histories.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice or Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ..... DATE: .....

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For Grandad Bill (1925-2020),
who inspired my love of musicals.

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Preface

In the UK in 2020, prior to the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic, around thirty musical theatre productions were running simultaneously in London, eighteen national tours travelled the country and a number of original in-house productions played in regional theatres. As lockdown commenced, theatres closed their doors and theatre workers were furloughed or dismissed as the impactful, indiscriminate force of coronavirus took hold. For me to overlook the coronavirus in this thesis would be careless: its consequences reverberate on a macro- and micro-level, significantly affecting the musical theatre performers, training and industry on which this research centres. While the great majority of this research has been conducted in the pre-COVID-19 world, in the Introduction I consider the virtual performances shared during the lockdown phase, drawing attention to how these underscore a number of the features and functions of musical theatre that are integral to the genre and to the specificity of this project.

What was once a thriving arts landscape has suffered a seismic blow to its economy, its culture, its communities, its workers, and to its ethos; the theatre and performance industry has endured devastating effects. It will take time for theatre and its audiences to acclimatise to a new kind of normality following the catastrophic force of the historic coronavirus crisis, but there is little doubt that eager audience members will return to the theatre, albeit a changed theatre, in their millions. Training institutions and universities, too, having moved whole curricula from the training or university building into virtual spaces to enable online learning, will reopen their doors to students and staff members. Some theatres, however, will remain permanently closed: with the constraints of social distancing greatly limiting audience capacities, it will be impossible for some of these institutions to survive financially.

Coronavirus has posed a critical threat to the UK's arts and culture landscape, upturning our quotidian social norms in the process. The long-term effects of the pandemic on the live performance industry are currently unknown and many questions continue to surface as we navigate through this national emergency: how will live performance and those who work within this sector survive without an economic model that allows venues to work with physical distancing? Prior to the second, four-week lockdown extending through November 2020, some theatres had started staging socially distanced performances which were often simultaneously streamed. In the domain of musical theatre, *Six* became the first West End musical to resume performances with a drive-in version planned to tour the UK from August 2020, although this

was cancelled due to local lockdowns being enforced. A semi-staged production of *Camelot* was performed at The Watermill, Newbury, and *Six*, along with *Les Misérables*, *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* were amongst the first musicals to reopen in London's West End. These were short-lived: in response to new government instructions announced on 14 December 2020, theatres were forced, once again, to quickly draw the curtain as the capital city was subjected to Tier 3 restrictions. The cancellation of live pantomimes and Christmas shows–productions which usually generate many millions of pounds in revenue annually–will not only massively impact the theatrical economy, but has also upturned a long-standing theatrical and sociocultural British theatre-going tradition.

To varying degrees, since the COVID-19 outbreak, precarity has become a marked factor of our daily lives. In a recent article, Mark Lilla (2020) reminds: "[T]he post-Covid future doesn't exist. It will only exist after we have made it". While much time can and, indeed, is spent attempting to predict the future, Lilla uses the image of a blind person moving with a cane to point out that one is only ever able to live in the "radical uncertainty" of the present (ibid.). A little tangential, perhaps, but pertinent to the topic of musical theatre and discussed in detail in Chapter 4, is to note that for the majority of those who pursue a career as a performer, this state of uncertainty is further heightened: a dominant (and arguably, at times, pseudo-requisite) feature of the performance industry.

We will collectively grieve for what has been lost during this extraordinary period: people; institutions; employment; time; experiences; physical contact; norms; a sense of community; our pre-COVID-19 lives. Live theatre is one of the UK's most valuable art forms; for many, it is a therapy of sorts to which one can turn in time of difficulty. It can be hoped that, in being allowed to meet face to face, body to body again, we will move forward – tentative but tenacious in our togetherness, vulnerable yet resilient, uncertain yet determined – using the transformative power of the present to create more dynamic and diverse narratives to entertain, enlighten, educate and empower audiences.

Janine Diamond
January 2021

INTRODUCTION | MAKING A CASE FOR THE TRIPLE THREAT

Although millions of audience members have been thrilled by musical theatre performers in the moment of live performance, the specificities of the craft of musical theatre performers are rarely discussed. In this thesis I expose the training practices of the musical theatre performer, arguing that the little-explored process of training offers crucial insights into the challenging vocation to which many performers aspire and the musical theatre industry more widely. I assert that musical theatre training functions not only to prepare the student for professional performance contracts, but resembles a micro-industry in which factors of the industry are mirrored to ready the trainee for the conditions that characterise this métier. The industry imposes strict expectations on the performer which require her not only to demonstrate increasingly difficult levels of skill and technique and a continually diversifying skillset, but to maintain high levels of resilience, discipline, enthusiasm, assertiveness, focus, commitment, and etiquette. I address the overlooked intricacies of the musical theatre performer's craft, evaluating what one institution's approach to creating this distinctive type of performer reveals about the radical effect that this process of enculturation has on the trainee; the training experience; and the musical theatre industry.

In this thesis I focus on the 'triple threat'–performer and training–within the context of the training environment. The concept of the triple threat can be broadly understood to refer to either a performer who is able to demonstrate equal proficiency in the three musical theatre disciplines–acting, singing, and dancing–or a form of vocational training for the musical theatre performer. An extended case study situated within an institution which arguably homes one of the most successful triple threat training courses in the country, ArtsEd (formerly known as the Arts Educational Schools, London) enables me to unpack the complexities of a process that prepares students to embark on what is, for most, a precarious vocation. Two ethnographic fieldwork residencies were undertaken at the institution: the first, seven-week residency took place over October and November 2014 and the second, nine-week residency was conducted between May and July 2015. As a graduate of the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course, I (re)turn to interrogate my own training experience at ArtsEd, utilising writing as method, practice as research workshops with other ArtsEd graduates, the development and execution of a performance installation, and embodied knowledge as a source of data to develop an autoethnographic thread through which training histories can be explored. This strand is

represented in the four *Curated Interfaces*: positioned between the four chapters, these accounts seek, ostensibly paradoxically, to both complement and counter the ethnographic narrative and to denote the partial, subjective, context-bound nature of knowing.

Applying this distinctive methodology allows the analyses of training experiences past and present to be juxtaposed; consequently, important questions are raised about the responsibility of training whilst indicating the significance of progressive pedagogies and shifting ideologies affecting current training. Understanding the formative effect that musical theatre training has on the performer in shaping their skills, identity, attitudes and values is to recognise training as an experience that impacts not only the career trajectory but the life trajectory of the practitioner. As musical theatre training becomes ever more sought after by young people hoping for a career in the performance industry, in this this thesis I seek to offer a timely, enlightening consideration of this rarely examined form of training.

Focusing on British training and, more specifically, on one institution, this focused consideration centres on what it means to train as a triple threat at ArtsEd. This allows an in-depth analysis of ArtsEd's practice whilst exposing the indivisible and impactful links between the performer, their training and the industry[1]: throughout this work, I refer to this interdependent relationship as the performer-training-industry loop. Revealing how each component of this concept is reified through training discourse, I highlight the circularity between industry and training to draw conclusions as to how current training and industry practices are both maintaining and challenging what may be identified as a regressive model. It is useful, however, to reflect on certain aspects of musical theatre training practices in the USA and Australia, and I have scrutinised different interpretations of the term 'triple threat' in various contexts to gauge the evolving definition of the term and its significance in current training and industry dialogues.

Building the setting for this thesis, I begin this introduction by detailing some of the constitutive elements of musical theatre that are central to the genre and to my research; this is achieved by a reflection on the musical theatre performances shared online as a result of the enforced lockdown during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. I then set out my personal motivations for conducting this research, detailing my research inquiry and discussing how issues of access and

[1] In this thesis I use the term 'industry' to refer to the commercial (musical) theatre industry, focusing on the mainstream production companies for which ArtsEd's musical theatre training prepares its students to work but taking into account, too, other companies in the entertainment sector evidenced as employers of musical theatre performers.

conversations with gatekeepers of training influenced my research design. Next, I outline the crystallized, ethnographic, autoethnographic and practice-based methodology used to investigate this type of training and introduce the training institution that forms the subject of my extended case study. Methods of data collection and analysis are specified and ethical matters are discussed prior to an explanation of the role of reflexivity within this research project. In the penultimate section, I turn to musical theatre and performer training scholarship, evidencing a gap into which the British triple threat performer and training have fallen.

Despite the draw of training to those who aspire to work in the live performance sector, in the UK the genre of musical theatre and those who are musical theatre performers appear to be often tainted with a stigma which undermines and overlooks the performer's labour and musical theatre's significant cultural and creative value. I unpick this *parti pris* later in this Introduction and in Chapter 1: here, beginning to counter this bias, I contemplate the recorded performances made available online during the lockdown of the UK due to coronavirus. In particular, I draw attention to the stripped-back musical theatre performances shared. These acts, *sans* advanced sound and lighting systems and glittering sets and costumes, serve to remind of a number of (musical) theatre's powerful functions and features. I succinctly highlight three such attributes; these are important because they are fundamental elements both of musical theatre and of this research.

Situating musical theatre

As lockdown commenced, theatre creators[2] produced virtual showings for the masses and living rooms were lit up with live-streamed and recorded theatre performances. Showings from the realm of musical theatre included: the National Theatre's 2017 Olivier award-winning production Sondheim's *Follies*; a star-studded online concert, *Take Me to the World: A Sondheim 90th Birthday Celebration*; the original Broadway cast of *Hamilton* reuniting on Zoom to surprise a superfan with their rendition of 'Alexander Hamilton'; "the Welsh of the West End" performing 'Seasons of Love' and 'You Will Be Found' from Jonathan Larson's *Rent* and Benj Pasek, Justin Paul and Steven Levenson's *Dear Evan Hansen*, respectively; and *Jersey Boys* casts from around the world coming together to perform Bob Gaudio and Judy Parker's 'Who Loves You'. Weekly lounge concerts were streamed live by Mike + the Mechanics vocalist and musical theatre performer,

[2] This term is used as an inclusive definition to avoid the use of the problematic expression of the "creative": explored further in Chapter 3.

Timothy Howar, accompanied by his wife, West End musical director Jodie Oliver-Howar, and, raising money for the NHS, *Wicked!* performer Hayley Gallivan performed Stephen Schwartz's 'Defying Gravity', recorded in her bathroom. Duetting with musical theatre stalwart Michael Ball, supported by the Voice of Care Choir, Second World War veteran and centenarian Captain Tom Moore reached number one in the UK charts with the charity single, 'You'll Never Walk Alone' from Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II's *Carousel*.

The first aspect to consider reminds us that theatre is inherently social. Theatre, Stella Adler writes, "is the place people come to see the truth about life and the social situation" (Adler in Kissel, 2000: p.30). Although the lockdown of the UK resulted in theatres having to close their doors to its workers and the general public, domestic spaces became performance areas as creators worked to keep a vital line of communication open digitally. The virtual lockdown performances can be understood to emphasise the musical (and its songs) as fluid art forms, echoing Bruce Kirle's (2005) argument which identifies musicals as "works-in-process". Kirle maintains that musicals are incomplete works which depend on the context and cultural moment(s) in which they are performed and received: "innately open, [and] subject to a plurality of readings" (2005: xix-xx). Decontextualised from their respective shows, musical theatre numbers shared during lockdown were able to be recontextualised by performers and viewers in relation to the coronavirus pandemic; performers, performance material, and audiences transcended the given dramatic context of a particular musical to communicate new messages, relatable and relevant to the current sociocultural climate.

These virtual performances allowed new collaborations to be made between performers, musical directors, musicians and viewers worldwide. Performances by cast members from a multitude of productions such as *Les Misérables*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Cats* and *Starlight Express* indicate the international reach, longevity and, until the coronavirus, economic success of the megamusical. Reflecting on the effects of lockdown, Matthew Goulish points out: "If distancing always affirms that which it distances, then social distancing affirms the social", emphasising the significance of human bonds despite the imposed barriers (Goulish, 2020). This assertion reinforces a notion about human communication and connection(s) as a social and emotional need: an idea with which the socially distanced lockdown performances chime.

Living with the then-new physical and social boundaries and watching streamed productions filmed with live theatre audiences, viewers witnessed their very recent sociocultural history. Although a signifier of what viewers were missing–most plainly, close physical proximity to

performers and fellow audience members–these performances offered an alternative form of socialisation and a new sense of immediacy: people were able to watch performances at the same time, albeit in different places, either 'live' on television or streamed at a later date. For some, this brought about a shared experience for people living together, for others, participation in virtual discussions about productions and performances. These virtual performances underscored theatre's ability to enable both the viewer and the performer to function as social participant, meaning maker, and collaborator, and to make emotional, intellectual and artistic connections.

Whilst exposing the privation of collaboration that would usually allow performers to be amplified by technical (lighting and sound) and visual (set, costumes and make-up) means, and the accompaniment of a live band or orchestra, the restriction of these performances to domestic settings called attention to the universality of COVID-19, emphasising that the theatrical stage reflects the changing world stage and, in the extraordinary case of lockdown, this mirror image was evidenced instantaneously. The apparent simplicity of the setting and the activity–a performer, in their home, singing a song–focused the viewer on the specificity of the lyrics, narrowed the divide between the world of the spectator and the world of the performer, and blurred the boundaries between the performer and the character whose thoughts she performed.

Raymond Knapp (2006) identifies how different modes of artificiality characterise the musical form, asserting that musicals, in the use of song, enable the audience to experience emotional highs whilst simultaneously being protected from the "dangerous, potentially destructive effect of emotions felt too deeply" (2008: p.8). Millie Taylor (2012) builds on Knapp's argument in her exploration of the ideas of 'integration' and 'distance' in musical theatre. Taylor's argument could offer an excellent starting point for a much more detailed analysis of the lockdown performances: it would be particularly fascinating to consider the altered relationship between performer/character and viewer as a result of these songs being presented in an isolated context (no pun intended), that is, without the fictional frame of the musical but, instead, with a personal and direct introduction by the performer. Here, however, it is useful to draw on Knapp and Taylor to make another point which reinforces the wide affective scope and impact of musical theatre. Taylor asserts: "because of its in-built capacity for disjunction and disruption the musical has the potential to be anything from high camp and escapist entertainment to a biting commentary on contemporary events and morality" (2012: p.63). I suggest, then, that the virtual

musical theatre performances, even in their fragmented forms, allowed the viewer to experience escapism, catharsis and/or to make connections between the performance and the sociocultural reality of lockdown.

My focus here is not on audiences per se, but thinking about the connection between the spectator and the performer highlights another characterising factor imperative to musical theatre and to this thesis. Explaining the centrality of feeling to theatre, Erin Hurley draws on Jill Dolan's (2005) theory of spectator feeling at the theatre to describe how theatre, through emotional labour, performs social work intervening in "how we as a society come to understand ourselves, our values, and our social world" (2010: p.10). More particularly, Hurley's thesis calls attention to theatre's ability to offer a deeply intimate, vicarious experience to both performers and audiences and, although alternative to live theatre, the virtual lockdown performances enabled viewers to experience a form of vicarity. In Chapter Three and *Curated Interface (2)*, I examine how musical theatre training creates opportunities for myriad vicarious experiences and how these can be recognised to function as an important tool in the training process.

Ultimately, Hurley's framework places emotion at the core of theatre and our lives, and accentuates how "feeling-labour" (2010: p.4) may be understood as the principal feature of theatre's cultural work (ibid.). Hurley emphasises the valuable work that theatre carries out and, in doing so, identifies the work of the performer. Interestingly, the aforementioned simplicity of some of the lockdown performances accentuated the technical labour of the performer, echoing the elements which I posit to constitute a key focus for training: that is, her ability to connect to the performance material and embody a character dramatically, emotionally, vocally and physically, communicating this to the audience in the moment of live performance. Outside the context of a full-length show and a theatrical performance space, viewers were offered a unique close-up of the performer and her technical and interpretive skills: an unusual insight that would be more commonly associated with the audition room. Oxymoronically, the distance created by displacing the performer and audience from the traditional performance space enabled us to get closer to the training imprint which marks the performer and her practice.

In this thesis, however, I argue that the performer's labour is far more complex than that which is able to be witnessed in the moment of live (or recorded) performance. How the triple threat trainee learns to labour, the specificities of the different types of labour and how these shape the training process and characterise industry culture, the environment in which these labours

operate, and how these impact the performer are at the heart of this research. Focusing specifically on musical theatre and the training of the triple threat performer, I counter perspectives that derogate this form and condemn it as lowbrow. I seek to demonstrate how musical theatre training, reflecting key features of the live performance experience, is a sensory-rich, visceral, physical, mental, and collaborative process.

The rationale for this research

I trained vocationally, completing a BA (Hons) Musical Theatre at ArtsEd between the years 2005-2008, prior to working as a professional performer. Whilst at the school, I studied various styles of dance: jazz, ballet, tap, contemporary, *pas de deux*, and commercial; acting; voice and speech; singing (based on Estill Voice Training). In addition, I took classes in acting through song; ensemble singing; singing repertoire; song and dance; pilates; tumbling; musical theatre history; and mock audition classes and masterclasses with industry professionals. I did not begin training until I was twenty-one and, although I was a little concerned about my age whilst auditioning for drama schools, I remember being told at the interview which took place during my ArtsEd recall that I was "the perfect age to train". At ArtsEd, age was scarcely mentioned: instead, students became associated with their 'playing ages'. I can recall the surprise of one particular staff member at learning it was my twenty-fourth birthday – there was something almost apologetic about their response, as if their prior conduct towards me would have been different had the person realised my age sooner. Witnessed in this brief encounter was what I recognised to be a discernable flash of conscience or a momentary manifestation of the staff member's moral awareness: a response which I understood to signify the person's recognition of their pedagogical practice. Consequently, this prompted important questions regarding the probity of teachers, power relations between teachers and students and, relatedly, how the age of the trainee might impact these relationships.

During the time in which I worked as a performer, I had two agents. Prior to an initial meeting with my second agent, I was advised by a close friend, a performer-turned-agent, to 'lower' my age and, if asked, say that I was twenty-three, instead of stating my real age which at the time was twenty-seven. It was suggested that I did the same when called in to be seen for teenage parts, despite the fact that the playing age listed on my C.V. as '16-25 years'. I found these suggestions deeply problematic: not only did they challenge my own moral principles but, also, highlighted the discriminatory nature of the industry. The advice left me pondering whether I was prepared

to tell an outright lie in order to (possibly) secure work and questioning how this act might contribute towards the continued existence of ageism within the industry. These brief examples evidence accepted yet thorny training and industry norms and are just a few of many moments that have stayed with me, provoking numerous questions about the vocation to which I have been so much committed. The limited access to sociocultural and pedagogical processes within training and the industry and the lack of a lucid dialogue between various gatekeepers and both performers and those outside institutions and the industry has contributed towards the maintenance of a culture that is shrouded in mystery.

Training at ArtsEd, much like working in the industry, was an all-absorbing and intensive experience, and I have been long aware of the profound effect the training has had on me. My purpose in this study is to gain a fuller understanding of a specific vocational musical theatre training as experienced by those who have undertaken it, are undertaking it, and are currently shaping the future of training. My research is qualitative and follows an iterative-inductive (O'Reilly, 2005) and crystallized (Ellingson, 2009) approach. The project has been driven by my fascination with human behaviour, a pressing interest in learning, pedagogy and the formative influences of training on trainees, and a fervent passion for musical theatre.

Research methodology, design and methods

Vocational training has been the subject of a number of recent debates in the academy. This growing dialogue features a diverse range of voices, including those of academics, conservatoire and drama school teachers and trainers, practitioners, and other industry professionals. The experience of vocational musical theatre training, however, has been mostly overlooked in both musical theatre scholarship and performer training scholarship and yet the form continues to thrive as the predominant route chosen by performers aiming to gain work within the professional musical theatre industry. Musical theatre training of this kind and, more specifically, triple threat training, is a relatively new phenomenon – perhaps this is another reason as to why so little has been written about it to date.

In this crystallized (auto)ethnographic thesis I aim not only to understand how training is discursively constructed, but to find modes through which the training process can be understood as embodied: a corporeal, emotional, sensorial and spiritual experience for trainee, trainer, researcher and in some capacity, I hope, the reader. This original approach within the

field of musical theatre training has led me to draw on theories from musical theatre, performer training, dance studies, and performance and theatre studies scholarship, but also from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, history, psychology, communication studies and from sound studies and sensory studies: I will go into specific theories in more detail in the individual chapters. An interdisciplinary perspective has supported new connections to be formed and explored in order to make sense of the triple threat training experience.

Research inquiry

Formulating a set of clear research goals has enabled me to clarify and justify the focus of my research, set the parameters for the thesis, and identify and address empirical issues prior to commencing my fieldwork. This process began with the identification and exploration of the "foreshadowed problems" (Malinowski, 1922) which supported decisions to be made regarding my chosen methodologies. My initial concerns centred on the enigmatic nature of training, the industry and, often, the performer, questions about the complexities of training to become an expert in three disciplines within three years, the culture of training, the immediate and long-term impact of training on the performer, post-training practices, the performer-training-industry loop, and the notion of training as performance. A survey of musical theatre and performer training literature–which I will draw on later in this introduction–confirmed that these issues, rooted in personal experience and in discussions with other performers about their training and careers, have received very little scholarly attention. Reflecting the necessary fluidity and flexibility of qualitative research, as articulated by O'Reilly (2005) and the principles which underlie my chosen method of data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), these questions and topics were reformulated and refined over the course of inquiry.

Until now, the triple threat performer and triple threat training have not been studied within the training context: therefore, a clear understanding of the performer, training process and culture and the workings of the performer-training-industry loop has not yet been reached, and recent histories of musical theatre training are at risk of being forgotten. The complex and unusual approaches within my qualitative research design provide appropriate methods through which the research problem can be addressed. In his examination of five particular approaches to qualitative research, John W. Cresswell ([1997] 2013) explores narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. In this work I employ a combination of three of these approaches–ethnography, narrative (autoethnography) and case study–alongside a practice as research approach and a crystallized framework. My project incorporates the common

characteristics of qualitative research as detailed by Cresswell, who draws on the work of Le Compte & Schensul (1999), Hatch (2002) and Marshall & Rossman (2010) in his composite analysis (Cresswell, [1997] 2013: p.46). It includes, but is not limited to, the following features: natural setting; researcher as key instrument; multiple methods; complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic; participants' meanings; emergent design; reflexivity; and holistic account (2013: pp.45-47). In this section, I consider issues of access and gatekeepers of training, discuss each of my approaches, describe the setting and participants and the data collection and analysis processes, delineate ethical considerations arising from this research and clarify the significance of reflexivity in this project.

Issues of access and gatekeepers of training

For the first two years of a three-year vocational course, trainees are 'protected' from the gaze of both the public eye and, to an extent, the outside professional eye. Trainees are not permitted to undertake any professional performance work whilst training unless granted permission by the institution. Whilst industry professionals may be invited into an institution to work with students, the initiation and arrangements regarding these exchanges remain strictly controlled by programme directors and members of staff. The closed nature of vocational training resulted in a number of challenges affecting the research design of this project: here I consider a key example which significantly impacted the design of this research.

Planning this project, I was interested in investigating the specific approaches of different institutions offering musical theatre training. Meetings were arranged with the course directors of the musical theatre programmes at two highly-regarded London institutions, one of these being ArtsEd. I had first visited the other school some ten years ago to watch graduating friends perform in their final year productions. It is an institution that not only maintains a strong reputation for its actor training, but has also developed a clear focus upon theatre research and scholarship. At the time of the meeting, the school's musical theatre course has been running for six years, marking it as a relatively new venture. Our meeting is friendly and professional and the course director expresses that they are "really interested" in my project. Certain elements of my proposal, however, are met with clear resistance. One explanation for this might be related to the characteristics of the iterative-inductive approach as noted by Martyn Hammersley (2008), which can make it impossible for the researcher to explain fully what is being studied. My plan to carry out research at ArtsEd is met with particular concern regarding any comparisons which could occur between the two courses. Asking about the access that I have been granted at ArtsEd, the

course leader comments on the "privileged position" that I have been offered, informing me that were I to have been an ex-student of this musical theatre course I would have been allowed to observe the training. Leaving the meeting, I reflect on our conversation, for the first time unsteadied by the somewhat surprising response of the course leader: the early outcome of our discussion signals that, in negotiating access to the school, I may well need to shift my research timeline and to alter the cross-institutional focus of the work. Furthermore, I have concerns about the possibility of a risky and difficult relationship with the institution. Interestingly, my encounter at the school serves to reveal and reinforce the private nature and opacity that has come to be recognised as characteristic of some training institutions and of the industry itself. This feature is accentuated in the example above, evidencing exclusivity as a by-product of training which strongly associates the performer or teacher with their respective training organisation. Some careful consideration resulted in the decision to concentrate on one institution: focusing on ArtsEd allowed the autoethnographic element to be fully realised and a crystallized framework to be developed.

A crystallized project

Underpinning my chosen combination of methodologies and methods is crystallization, as defined by Laura L. Ellingson (2009). Originally conceptualised by Laurel Richardson (1994, 2000), crystallization was introduced in qualitative research as an alternative to methodological triangulation. Triangulation, viewed either as a process through which several methods of data collection or sources of data are employed with the objective of reaching the 'truth' about the phenomenon being studied, or as a mechanism whereby the various viewpoints of a group of researchers are utilised to advance data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013), can be problematic for the qualitative researcher who "view[s] meaning as fundamentally tied to the context in which it is produced" (ibid: p.286). Pulling against the rigidity and flatness of the triangle, Richardson instead presents the metaphor of the crystal: "combining symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach" (2000, p. 934). Ellingson challenges the traditionally dichotomous relationship between art and science and suggests that research must be envisioned to exist along a continuum anchored by positivism/postpositivism on the far right, social constructivism and interprevism occupying the middle ground, and art anchoring the left at the other end of the gamut (2011: p.596). Further developing Richardson's abstraction, Ellingson presents a framework for qualitative research (2009):

> Crystallization combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers' vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (p.4)

Expanding on her definition, Ellingson outlines five key principles of crystallised approaches. These projects:

1. Offer deep, thickly described, complexly rendered interpretations of meanings about a phenomenon or group.
2. Represent ways of producing knowledge across multiple points of the qualitative continuum, generally including at least one middle-ground (constructivist or postpositivist) and one interpretive, artistic, performative, or otherwise creative analytic approach; often crystallized texts reflect several contrasting ways of knowing.
3. Utilize more than one genre of writing (e.g., poetry, narrative, report) and/or other medium (e.g., video, painting, music).
4. Include a significant degree of reflexive consideration of the researcher's self and roles in the process of research design, data collection, and representation.
5. Eschew positivist claims to objectivity and a singular, discoverable Truth in favor of embracing knowledge as situated, partial, constructed, multiple, embodied, and enmeshed in power relations.

Ellingson's principles of crystallization, 2009: p.10

Detailing each of my chosen qualitative approaches I will explain how the design of this thesis responds to Ellingson's foundational ideas. These principles have been particularly valuable in solidifying my philosophical stance and enable an original approach that seeks to support a robust and compelling account of the triple threat training experience.

Ethnographic approach

Ethnographic work within the field of performance studies provides examples of the potential success of employing an ethnographic framework. Gay McAuley (2012) presents a lucid account of a professional rehearsal process for Australian Company B Belvoir's production of Michael Gow's *Toy Symphony*, directed by Neil Armfield. McAuley emphasises the limited amount of scholarly focus upon the rehearsal room, leaving these concealed processes "deeply buried in the past" (McAuley, 2012: p.3). If post-training rehearsal processes are committed to become 'sleeping memories'–chronicles exclusive to those who have experienced them who may, potentially, render them dormant as they are seduced by the immediate pull and gratification of the performance–training itself might be considered to be even more profoundly hidden from view. As so little has been written regarding vocational musical theatre training in the UK, minimal knowledge regarding the intricacies of this practice can be drawn from existing literature.

McAuley draws on Paul Atkinson's condemnation of both cultural studies and performance and theatre scholars' "collective failure" in connection with the scarcity of studies investigating "the social worlds of cultural production as collective work in socially organised settings" (Atkinson in McAuley, 2012: p.3). McAuley concurs with Atkinson, acknowledging his critical statement as an indicator of a "whole intellectual programme" reverberating with McAuley's "own evolving concern with rehearsal practice" (McAuley, 2012: p.3). Just as McAuley (2012) and Atkinson (2006) have used an ethnographic approach to produce valuable insights into their respectively studied sociocultural settings, I use ethnography in an attempt to describe and interpret the triple threat training experience.

Ethnographic methodologies have been propelled into sharp focus over the last fifteen years. This movement might be attributed to the shifting of societal value: a move from dwelling in what Atkinson and Silverman (1997) have called an "interview society" to living in an "observation society" (Gobo, 2011: p. 25). As Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (1995) state, an ethnographic methodology prioritises observation:

> In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. (p.1)

Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that the researcher does not necessarily assume the position of solely 'passive observer' devoid of social or physical interaction. This point is reinforced by Flick: "in most cases, conversations, statements and questions or sometimes *ad hoc* interviews are involved in observations" (2011: p.122, italics in original). In order to collect a range of data from across the ArtsEd training setting, my research design incorporated periods in which I immersed myself in the field. As Luders asserts, a defining feature of ethnography lies in exploration and openness to absorbing oneself (for a time) in unstructured data (Luders in Flick, 2011):

> first [there is] the risk and the moments of the research process which cannot be planned and are situational, coincidental and individual … Second, the researcher's skillful activity in each situation becomes more important … Third, ethnography … transforms into a strategy of research which includes as many options of collecting data as can be imagined and are justifiable. (p.122)

An ethnographic methodology, then, supports an iterative-inductive research approach. The fieldwork undertaken during this project has allowed the collection and analysis of a substantial

amount of data obtained during two residencies at training institution, ArtsEd, with a specific focus on the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course. Blommert and Jie assert: "Ethnographic fieldwork is aimed at finding out things that are often not seen as important things but belong to the implicit structures of people's life". (Blommert & Jie, 2010: p.3) With this in mind, the observation periods inside the institution included time spent in but also outside classes, allowing a clearer, fuller picture to be drawn of the current training experience. This choice raises questions around the nature of the ethnographic engagement, highlighting ethical implications involved with observation. Speaking of her experience observing the rehearsal process, McAuley draws on ethnographer Tim Asch's avowal: "Observers and subjects may differ greatly in their perceptions of when an event or interaction begins and ends and whom it includes" (Asch in Rollwagen, 1998: p.3). Just as McAuley negotiates the tricky necessity to observe performers, the creative team and members of the production crew outside the rehearsal room, the need to observe students and staff outside the training studios has required me to work with research participants sensitively and respectfully. In doing so, I have addressed my own reflexive role as researcher within the vocational training environment: I consider this important aspect further a little later in the Introduction.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are characterised by the genre of ethnographic narrative. Like many qualitative research projects, "thick description" (Ryle, 1971, Geertz, 1973) features as a key aspect of this work. It was Clifford Geertz who borrowed Ryle's term and used it to describe ethnography, noting that what defines ethnography is not the ethnographer's procedures such as tracing genealogies, mapping the field and keeping a diary, but "intellectual effort" (1973, p.6). Geertz explains that the ethnographer is required to pursue an interpretive process of actions and experiences within which the participants' life experiences are appropriately contextualised (ibid, p.9-10). Building on Geertz's (1973) depiction of thick description, Norman K. Denzin (1989) states:

> A thick description does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (p.83)

In thick description, then, as Schwandt succinctly asserts, is "the interpretive characteristic of description rather than detail per se that makes it thick" (2001, p.255). My approach to thick

description has been informed by Denzin's (1989) development of the concept, in which thick description gives rise to "thick interpretation". Employing this method, I aim to reach the reader with "thick meaning" (Ponterotto, 2006).

Autoethnographic approach

Evidence of the emergence of the self in ethnography can be tracked through the history of the discipline of anthropology and the term 'autoethnography' has been employed by anthropologists and sociologists for at least four decades, although, as Deborah Reed-Danahay observes, the word "can have multiple meanings" (1997: p.4). Reed-Danahay proposes that the history of the term can be separated into two pathways – one related to ethnography and the other to life history (ibid.: p.4). Whilst, in Denzin's view, both might be considered as concepts that have historically defined the (auto)biographical method (2014: p.15), clear distinctions characterise each pathway. Considering the differences between autobiography and autoethnography, Freeman contends (2010):

> autobiography starts to morph into ethnography at the point where researcher/writers understand their personal histories to be implicated in larger socio-cultural frameworks and take steps to make their own experiences a lens through which other experiences can be pulled into focus. (p.181)

Autoethnographic and, indeed, autobiographic methods and texts, however, continue to be attacked in regard to their research validity. Freeman points out that, in performance studies, the term autoethnography "remains contested, even maligned" (2010: p.184). The researcher framing his or her work through the lens of personal experience might have to deal with criticisms including "claims of narcissism, self-absorption, exaggeration, exhibitionism and self-indulgence" (Sikic-Micanovic, 2010: p.45), charges that are also addressed by Amanda Coffey (1999) and Andrew C. Sparkes (2002). Arguing these charges, Sparkes considers the suspicious treatment of autoethnography from many within the academy, attributing this to its identity as a "form of forbidden narrative, [providing] challenges to conventional ways of writing and knowing about the social world" (2002: p.89). On the common charge of self-indulgence, Sparkes describes a fine line between being self-indulgent and self-knowing, cautioning those who produce autoethnographies to adopt their position carefully and reflectively (2002: p.89-90). He makes clear that the position frequently assumed by those within the academic community, that is, the stance which is inclined to condemn all such works as wholly self-indulgent is "a dangerous and threatening move that needs to be challenged and rejected" (Sparkes, 2002: p.91). In addition, Sparkes draws on his own work along with that of Bochner and Ellis (1996), Eakin

(1999), Gergen (1999), Mykhalovskiy (1996), Stanley (1993) and Tsang (2000), arguing that the theory of relationalism underpins autobiography and that this, consequently, overturns the concerns raised by critics regarding self-indulgence (Sparkes, 2002: p.92-94). Continuing to build on the differences which distinguish autoethnographical writing from autobiography, Freeman notes the ability of autoethnography to provide an individual perspective whilst also forging a link with a more collective understanding (2010):

> In this way it is an approach that recognises and moves within communities rather than purely individualised experience, hence autoethnography's switching of bios (a life) for ethnos (a people). It is through this understanding of self as something innately relational that autoethnography becomes more than just a word. (p.184)

Relationality will be explored further in the prologue to the *Curated Interfaces*, but it is important to acknowledge here the inescapable and, in the context of this project, I suggest, unignorable, impact that ethnographic fieldwork has on the ethnographer.

Collins and Gallinat note that, in conducting the research for his canonical ethnography of the Trobiand Islands, anthropologist Malinowski went to great lengths to separate himself from those whom he observed. The effects of these actions became evident in his posthumously published diary: "a painful reminder that *doing* ethnography is inevitably intertwined with the rather subjective and deeply human *being* in the field". (Collins and Gallinat, 2010: p.2) Similar challenges are cited as the impetus for McLean and Leibing's 2007 publication, which brings together a selection of scholars who seek to deal with "the shadow sides of their own research" arising from experiences in the ethnographic field (2007: p.6). Ellis, Adams and Bochner suggest that most researchers now recognise that the assumption that research "can be done from a neutral, impersonal, and objective stance" is not tenable, noting that autoethnography makes explicit emotionality, subjectivity, and the influence of the researcher on their research (2011: [online]). Carolyn Ellis pinpoints one of the distinctive aims of the autoethnographer in his or her work is to "connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social" by privileging "concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection" (2004: p. xix). Reed-Danahay asserts that "[i]ncreasingly, ethnography is autobiographical and autobiography reflects cultural and social frames of reference" (1997: p.9). Drawing on Ellis's description and both Reed-Danahay's and Kim Etherington's definition of the term, I understand and utilise autoethnography in this thesis as "a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context" (Reed-Danahay, 1997: p.9; Etherington, 2004: p139-140). Whilst an awareness of the scholarly tensions brought about by autoethnography informs my research

practice, by employing autoethnography as a process and a product, personal experience becomes an integral component of my analysis of training. In this work, the autoethnographic strand operates in tandem with the practice as research component: for this reason, I turn now to consider my practice as research approach before detailing how these two approaches function in the thesis.

Practice as research (PaR) approach

Working closely with trained performers, the practice as research (from here on, PaR) element within this research fulfils a number of objectives. It follows a bipartite pathway: the first route–through practical workshops–puts trained performers' embodied memories under detailed scrutiny in order that the long-term effects of training might be explored, documented and further understood; and the second route–initially developed to clarify the place of practice in this work–amalgamates my own history as a performer-in-training with the insights obtained as a researcher at ArtsEd to offer a new mode through which those outside training might encounter this distinctive practice. The two PaR processes were used as research methods enabling material for the *Curated Interfaces* to be generated.

With a key focus on understanding the impact of the training experience on the performer, gaining knowledge through the practice of ArtsEd-trained practitioners has been a significant feature of my research design from the outset of the inquiry. The description below, detailing the purpose of the PaR workshops, signals the significance and necessity of using PaR as the mode through which to investigate corporeal memories of training.

Purpose of PaR workshops

1. To identify the ways in which training is embodied and remembered (corporeally and mentally).

1.1 To create an environment that allows the possibility of working in a range of creative modes.

1.2 To discuss, explore and respond to these memories of training in a safe and supportive space.

1.3 To recognise both common themes and points of difference in the memories shared.

2. To initiate input into the project from performers who have trained vocationally at ArtsEd (but who are not current students).

2.1 To think about how we have articulated and continue to articulate our training to others.

2.2 To consider how we relate to ourselves physically and how the training experience has contributed to our sense of self and identity.

2.3 To identify characteristics that may signal the specificity of the training delivered by ArtsEd.

2.4 To determine aspects from our training that have stayed with us, and how they are manifested in the present.

3. To set up an opportunity to enable training archives to be revisited and reflected upon.

3.1 To consider and respond to the ways in which these archives stimulate memories of (and not limited to) certain situations, conversations, movements, text, emotions).

3.2 To discuss the value of these archives.

3.3 To think about the role we play in creating a relationship with these documents and objects and, in a wider sphere, how we experience a return to the past.

Robin Nelson's (2013) book, *Practice as Research in the Arts*, proved to be particularly instructive as I made decisions regarding my research methodologies. The assertion that his proposed PaR model is not one which should be limited to those who define themselves as arts practitioners-researchers, but might also be followed by "education, ethnographic and many other disciplinary practices" (Nelson, 2013: p.9) informed my reading practice, illuminating connections between my methodological approaches. Notable resonances which permeated not only my praxis as a practitioner-researcher but also as an ethnographer and autoethnographer included Nelson's focus on the objective within PaR to "make the 'tacit' more 'explicit'" (2013: p.43) – an aim that is, I suggest, extremely apposite to the musical theatre training environment – and, describing his use of the term 'praxis', an emphasis on the intertwined relationship between practice and theory described by Nelson as "an iterative process of 'doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing'" (2013: p.32), with which parallels can be drawn with Reilly's iterative-inductive approach (2005) to ethnography.

Seven PaR workshops were conducted, the participants for which were graduates of the ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course between the years of 2006 and 2008. Invitations to attend were sent by email. Although there was a significant amount of interest in the project from graduates in response to the invitations, the various and, often, limited, availabilities of the graduates made it challenging to schedule the initial workshop, which took place on Sunday 26 April, 2015 at Chiswick Theatre Arts, London. Critical reflection upon the first workshop together with fruitful feedback from the participants influenced the design of the second phase of workshops, which were conducted on Sunday 4 October and Sunday 18 October, 2015 at ArtsEd, London. The second thread of the PaR element of this research took the form of an interactive installation: summarised briefly below, this performative work is reimagined in the final *Curated Interface*.

Someday Just Began: an interactive installation

Initially presented at the TaPRA Postgraduate Symposium (University of Manchester, 7 February 2015), *Someday Just Began* was created as a catalytic tool to facilitate some decisions I was making regarding the function and modality of practice in the thesis. Invitations to present three further iterations of the work at the STR New Researchers Network's Symposium (The Shard, London, 19 June 2015), the 'Performing the Archives' Conference (NUI Galway, 23 July 2015) and the V&A Museum, London (16 April 2016) and the resulting performances prompted questions pertinent to my research inquiry. This enabled the work to be developed and consequently become an integral strand of the PaR component within the research. In *Curated Interface (4)*, the reader is invited to experience the reworked installation through its documentation.

The PaR and autoethnographic elements of this work are represented in the four *Curated Interfaces* in a multigenre and multimedia form. Structured to reflect both the transience and persistence of memory, these compositions have been informed by Richardson's (1994, 2000) conceptualisation of "CAP [creative analytical processes] ethnographies". They embrace what Denzin (1997), Ellis (1997) and Ellis and Bochner (2000) have defined as "evocative autoethnography" and what Carol Rambo has termed "layered accounts" ([Rambo] Ronai, 1995). Punctuating the thesis and presenting different ways of knowing, the interfaces interact with the four more traditionally presented chapters.

ArtsEd: an extended single-case study

Hammersley and Atkinson maintain that investigating a single setting facilitates in-depth study ([1983] 2007: p.3). In ethnographic research, Gobo points out, the term 'case' is interpreted in a number of different ways ([1997] 2011):

> What is usually referred to as the 'case' (the organization or the group studied) is in fact the setting. The cases are instead the hundreds of occurrences or instances (pertaining to rituals, ceremonials and routines) that the researchers observe, or the dozens of individuals that they meet *dozens of times* during their presence in the field. The researcher is […] interested […] in the behaviours which take place within [the organisation or group]. (p.29, italics in original)

Conducting an extended single-case study focusing on the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course at ArtsEd allows the context within which the triple threat is shaped to be revealed, through which a nuanced understanding of the 'triple threat' performer within her 'natural setting' of training is sought.

Setting

Cone Ripman House, situated on Bath Road, just off the bustling Turnham Green Terrace within the west London suburb of Chiswick, is the base for the ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course. The School of Musical Theatre shares the building with the School of Acting, the ArtsEd Independent Day School, and the ArtsEd Sixth Form. The musical theatre course receives around 1500 applications each year and has an annual intake of around fifty students. Amongst the school's alumni have been Margaret Lockwood, Dame Julie Andrews, Darcey Bussell, Martin Clunes, Bonnie Langford, Nigel Havers, Adam Cooper, Oliver Tompsett and Sally Anne Triplett. The claim that the school provides "the very best musical theatre training in the UK" (ArtsEd, 2019) is supported by bodies such as Ofsted (2015) and, regarding the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre programme, 93% students agreed that they were satisfied overall with the quality of the course (National Student Survey, 2018).

The institution was chosen for the following reasons: 1) the school offers highly successful triple threat training in the form of its BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course; 2) I was able to begin my research near to the beginning of the academic year and return later in the year to carry out a second fieldwork residency; 3) the Director of the School of Musical Theatre, the Musical Theatre department staff members and the students were willing to participate in my research; 4) it is the school at which I trained – this enabled the autoethnographic and PaR aspects of the project to be fully developed and contained the case study temporally and physically.

Participants

The participants for the case study were the students and staff of ArtsEd's BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course. At the commencement of my fieldwork, the first year has a cohort of fifty-one students, the second year is made up of forty-seven students, and the third year is comprised of forty-three students. Twenty members of the School of Musical Theatre staff were observed during fieldwork residencies, along with three professional production teams and four guest tutors.

The data collection process

The process of data collection took place over a year and comprised of two fieldwork residencies at ArtsEd – the first residency lasted seven weeks, beginning on 6th October and finishing on the 21st November 2014 and the second residency lasted nine weeks, beginning on 5th May and finishing on 3rd July 2015. During these periods, I used the following methods to collect data: observation; interviewing; the gathering of documentary evidence; along with conducting seven PaR workshops. Alongside my fieldnotes, I kept a research diary for continued reflection and as an aid to document, process and develop my thinking about developing themes and connections within the data.

Observation

During the fieldwork residencies, time was divided equally between observing the three year groups. Each year group is divided into three mixed-sex classes for the majority of lessons: this changes for first-year ballet classes for which the men and women are separated and for Tap (and, due to timetabling, some Contemporary, Acting and Voice and Speech classes) which is streamed depending on ability. The following classes were observed: Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Contemporary, Commercial, *Pas de Deux*, Ballroom, Song and Dance, Acting, Acting through Song. Voice and Speech, Physical Theatre, Contextual Studies, Ensemble, one-to-one Singing Repertoire lessons, project rehearsals, third year production rehearsals, and tutorials. Observations continued outside formal classes during the working day.

Interviews

Ethnographic training undertaken at the University of Exeter and experience of conducting ethnographic interviews whilst working as a research assistant informed my research practice as I designed and conducted the interview phase of the project. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with twelve members of the full-time BA (Hons) Musical Theatre staff members.

Representatives from across the range of the three musical theatre disciplines were interviewed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in order that they could be analysed: this allowed me to fully engage with each interviewee, observing subtleties such as facial expressions and body language that might otherwise have been missed. To ensure that the participants felt as relaxed and comfortable as possible, I encouraged each person to choose the time and place for their interview.

Documentary evidence

A range of formal and solicited documentation has been consulted during the data collection and the data analysis periods. Course documents including a prospectus, student handbook, timetables and year group lists were obtained as points of reference. A selection of audio recordings were taken during class observations and, towards the very end of each residency, photographs and video footage were acquired.

Data analysis

This research used thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). There are numerous interpretations of thematic analysis and its application, and Braun and Clarke's method (2006) can be approached in more than one way. Recently, Braun and Clarke have reflected on their initial writing (2006), clarifying their approach and redefining this as "reflexive thematic analysis" (2019).[3] Thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke argue, is not a methodology in itself, but a flexible method free from the ties of a particular epistemological or theoretical viewpoint (2006: p.78). They detail six phases (see Table 1) along with a 15-point checklist of criteria for the researcher to consider when ascertaining whether she has produced a sound thematic analysis (2006: pp.86-96), and these provided a clear framework to employ.

1. Familiarising yourself with your data;	4. Reviewing themes;
2. Generating initial codes;	5. Defining and naming themes;
3. Searching for themes;	6. Producing the report.

Table 1: Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to thematic analysis

[3] Although this writing was published after the fieldwork and data analysis process for this research had been completed, Braun and Clarke's clear, progressive consideration offers valuable insights into the significance of researcher subjectivity and critical reflexivity and corroborates my early methodological decisions and approach.

This method of analysis was used across six data sets: fieldnotes; interview transcripts; PaR workshop documentation; a student blog; ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course documents; installation documentation; and, while the majority of the data was recorded in written form, this also included audio and visual data in the form of photographs, video footage and audio recordings. The data was coded and preliminary overarching themes and sub-themes – semantic and latent – were developed for each individual data set: these themes were then reviewed and refined to produce final themes and sub-themes. As Braun and Clarke suggest, the six steps delineated in this method of analysis are not linear, but fluid, recursive and gradual (2006: p.86-87), and this was reflected throughout my own process of analysis.

Analysis was completed by hand using highlighters, Post-Its and large sheets of paper. This manual process was particularly helpful during the concentrated data analysis periods that followed fieldwork residencies, PaR workshops and installation performances: a tangible approach supported the data familiarisation process and aided a kinaesthetic, visual learning experience that enabled the management of a large data corpus, the action of moving back, forth and between data sets, and the development of thematic maps.

Ethical considerations

Ensuring an ethical research process has been critical to the development of this work. As a graduate of the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course at ArtsEd I embarked on this work with a certain level of understanding about the training that is offered and a well-established professional working relationship with a number of staff members at the school. This, I believe, has enabled me to carry out the research in a sensitive manner.

My research has conformed to the required standards of ethical practice as detailed in the University of Bristol Ethics of Research Policy and Procedure and full ethical approval was granted by the University Ethics of Research Committee. Developing my application for ethical approval ensured a considered and informed approach to my study: this was supported by ongoing engagement with ethics literature. All participants were provided with a participant information sheet and consent form. Those involved were made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time and participants and my contact details were shared so that participants could reach out with questions or concerns. Interviews with staff members were audio-recorded and transcribed electronically: transcriptions were encrypted and paper media was stored securely when not in use.

Due to the nature of the research design and the aims of my thesis, the institution and research subjects have been identified. Staff members' full names and students'[4] and graduates' first names are used; however, anonymity is granted on the rare occasion in which the participant has requested that this be the case, or if the data is considered 'sensitive'. Embracing a reflexive approach, I reflect my ethical practice throughout this thesis.

The role of reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity has become prevalent and explicit in much academic discourse and is considered by many as an essential aspect of qualitative research practice; indeed, evidence of this can be found in the literature surrounding each of my methodological approaches. Drawing on Bradbury-Jones (2007), Guillemin and Gillam (2004), Pillow (2003) and Stronach et al. (2007), Roni Berger asserts that reflexivity is "commonly viewed as the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome" (2013, p.220). While this definition offers one clear and common understanding of reflexivity[5] and highlights a research process characterised by introspection, my own approach to reflexivity in this work has been guided by Edge's (2011) explication of the concept.
Edge reflects on reflexivity along the dimensions of linguistics, psychology, philosophy, and ecology (through which he introduces the notions of affordance and context), before focusing on reflexivity in qualitative research (2011, pp.29-39). Stating that "reflexivity in qualitative research is concerned with the ongoing, mutually-shaping interaction between the researcher and the researched", Edge connects this cycle to the paradoxical hermeneutic circle, as conceptualised by philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (Rickman in Edge, 2011):

> The hermeneutic circle involves the alternation between the detail and the big picture, the historical and the systematic, acknowledging no best place to start, and that there is a paradox involved in saying that our knowledge arises from our experience and that our experience is shaped by our knowledge. (p.167)

Whilst acknowledging the paradoxicality of the hermeneutic circle, in discussing reflexivity Edge deems it helpful to think with regard to two features of this cycle: "the influence of the researcher on the research" or that which he calls "*prospective reflexivity*", and "the influence of the

[4] When students with the same first name feature in the analysis, the initial of their second name is used for purposes of clarification.
[5] Linda Finlay's (2003) typology of five variants of reflexivity offers a useful analysis of some of the other ways in which the concept has been approached and defined by researchers in modern scholarship.

research on the researcher", referred to by Edge as "*retrospective reflexivity*" (2011: pp.35-38, emphasis in original). For Edge, reflexivity is "a unitary phenomenon that we can envisage as two parts communicating with each other, the better to uncover the nature of the whole" (2011: p.38). A striking parallel can be drawn here between Edge's definition of reflexivity and the premise on which crystallisation is formed. Although Ellingson (2014) rejects dichotomous views in favour of the methodological continuum and its offer of multiplicity, Edge's interpretation of reflexivity, too, can be understood to "promote(…) the best of multiple worlds by refusing the 'either/or' choice (…) and choosing 'both/and' (Ellingson, 2014: p.448). I introduce the concept of reflexivity and its significance in a limited capacity here, with the goal of developing and incorporating a reflexive component throughout this work that is manifested both implicitly and explicitly, allowing the reader to encounter this in various modes.

Musical theatre and performer training scholarship

Over the past decade, the British academy has seen a growing number of scholars studying musical theatre. Unlike the United States, in which the musical has long been valued as a rich and worthy aspect of cultural America's cultural history, many UK-based scholars seem to have avoided the form, which–until relatively recently–has resulted in a questionable lacuna. Taylor has been at the forefront of this modern musical theatre research. Problematising the simplification of musical theatre to "[just] entertainment", Taylor (2012) draws on David Savran (2004) and Stacy Wolf's (2007) arguments to open an investigation of the complexities of entertainment and pleasure, asserting that "providing entertainment is not only valuable, but difficult" (Taylor, 2012: p.3). Taylor points out that, whilst a significant number of writers and academics are interested in the form, two key issues have limited a greater understanding of musical theatre. First, the existing literature does not address how musical theatre makes connections and interacts with its audiences but, instead, can be categorised in the following ways (2012):

> [M]usicals can be studied as literary texts, from a musical perspective – including the relationship with text and narrative structure, in terms of the musical's development in history or social history, or by addressing the subject in relation to specific issues such as gender. In addition there is a large body of work on film musicals particularly of the classic Hollywood era, and another body of work on opera and on voice. (p.3)

Secondly, Taylor deems the study of entertainment to be just as problematic: "with a body of literature focusing on a post-Marxist reading of its economics, and very little that questions the ways in which pleasure is generated" (ibid : p.3). Musical theatre performers, I would argue, are also missing from Taylor's list of omissions. Whilst performers are included in Taylor's investigation (2012), they are mostly discussed with reference to playing characters in service to the musical in which they perform. The objectives of the musical theatre performer and the complexities of their practice are largely unacknowledged: in the main, Taylor's focus is weighted more heavily on the audience's reception and experience. Let it be clear that I do not wish to rule out the plethora of components that make up the collaborative system of a theatre production but, instead, I place a spotlight on the practice of the musical theatre performer.

If one were to compare the musical theatre training environment with the environments within the professional theatre industry (rehearsal rooms, audition spaces, performance areas and backstage zones), it is likely that many sociocultural and environmental crossovers would be discovered. This is, perhaps, unsurprising; after all, training does not end when the performer finishes a formal training course but continues for the duration of her career. The fluidity of the term 'training' (in its usage within the English-speaking theatre domain) caters for this malleability:

> [T]he word *training*…indiscriminately refers to the instruction given at acting schools, in acting classes, on stages and in workshops, and also to the practical exercises that actors may undertake *before* a production, as well as to the work carried out by actors who wish to perfect their art without a specific production in view. The absence of distinction between three different aspects of preparation (formation, production and the development of the actor's art) makes training a quasi-generic term in the Anglophone world. (Féral, 2009: p.17, italics in original)

Whilst Josette Féral finds the blurriness of this term and its usage problematic, the reminder that training goes beyond the confines of the institution is useful. This inquiry focuses not only on present musical theatre training, but also looks to how graduates use, remember, and forget their training in their daily lives (whether they are working in the industry or outside it).

Tracing its widespread use and how it functions as an all-purpose term, Féral reveals that the word 'training' can refer to all forms of the performer's preparation and to practices which happen both outside and inside institutions (2009: p.17). Consequently, Féral argues, there is a lack of clear division between the three facets of preparation, "formation, production and the development of the actor's art" (ibid.) Despite the fact that Féral takes issue with the ambiguity

of the phrase, the way in which she describes the definition does not lack discrimination. Whilst she acknowledges the range of practices to which the term can refer, in referencing vocational training Féral limits the definition to "the instruction given in acting schools" and "in acting classes" (2009: p.17). This description not only confines training to a single discipline (acting), but the scope is further restricted by being shaped only as a practice of tutelage. This oversight reinforces a narrow and stunted definition of training: identifying and investigating important features of the ArtsEd's sociocultural and sensory environment, I address this failure to recognise the significance of factors within the training process that occur outside formally taught sessions.

Feral is not alone in observing the ambiguity of the term 'training'. Reflecting on the term in relation to theatre, Ian Watson asserts: "Training is a generic term that means different things to different people" (Watson, 2001: p.1), carrying specific but diverse meanings across a wide range of geographical and cultural contexts (ibid.). This statement is challenged by John Matthews (2011):

> to describe training as a 'generic term' is to overlook the fact that a diverse range of people all use this term to explain and interpret their practices, and this would seem to suggest that, even if there is no essential *meaning* to the term, there may be shared characteristics of any activity of experience that is called training. (pp.8-9)

Watson does, however, maintain that, despite the differences, "the ultimate goal of all actor training is to prepare its students to perform" (2001: p.1). In addition, he lists the accumulation of certain skills and training's function to enable students to prepare for a performance as common features of training (ibid.). Watson does not fail to recognise, then, the possibility of shared characteristics within training practices but, in line with Féral, I would argue that the specificities and diversities of the preparation stage are lost in this description. Moreover, Watson, like Féral, restricts the concept of performer training to "actor training" (2001: p.1) and, in doing so, musical theatre training is omitted. Arguably, the term 'actor' might be understood to have musical theatre performer conflated within it: however, in relation to training, it has become commonplace for 'musical theatre' and 'actor' training to be dialogically separated. As a result, the lack of reference to the specificities or complexities of the musical theatre disciplinary form and practice in the above examples makes it possible to conclude that musical theatre is not being considered.

Dividing training into two approaches, indirect and direct, Watson categorises the Western training tradition as the indirect form, based on learning methods and technique that can "be applied to creating the next production" (Watson, 2001: p.2), and places 'direct training' within the long-established performance cultures of Asia. Describing direct training, Watson highlights characteristics such as the teaching of roles directly from the traditional repertoire and – separate from any work on repertory – learning additional skills and undertaking a heavy, physical regime (Watson, 2001: ibid.). Interestingly, these features of direct training are at the core of vocational musical theatre training in the UK.

Whilst a number of enlightening studies into certain aspects of musical theatre and specific performer training practices have been conducted within UK scholarship, the musical theatre training experience has not, as yet, been explored, nor has the voice of the musical theatre performer been heard[6]. I am particularly interested as to how this absence connects to questions of articulation and the sometimes enigmatic nature of performers in relation to vocational training practices. In his introduction to PaR, John Freeman draws on the arguments of visual art critic Clement Greenberg and art scholar William Rubin about art and thinking and the practitioner's consciousness of their own work, respectively, making a connection between these and performance using Andrew Quick's depiction of "'the conventional refusal of the experimental artist to explain their work'" (Quick in Freeman, 2010: p.ix). Similarly, McAuley has witnessed the unwillingness of performers to explicate processes of performance in which they have participated. Reflecting on interviews she conducted with professional performers during her ethnographic study of a rehearsal process, McAuley has discussed the seeming inability of the actors to be critically reflexive, putting this behaviour down to these conversations taking place early in the run of the production amidst a mass of publicity calls and press interviews (University of Exeter, 16 October 2013). Questions might also be raised about the renowned mystery of the theatre industry with its reputation as a closed circuit, exclusive to those who work within it. A personal conversation with comedian, Andy Ford, echoes this line of thought. I first met Andy in 2011, when we were both under contract, as performers, with First Family Entertainment. The circumstances in which we met are important as they indicate the foundations that our relationship is built upon; to Andy I am a fellow performer within the business.

[6] Michael Ellison's (1994) PhD thesis, which focuses on the Broadway triple threat performer, stands out as one of very few studies to privilege the voice of the performer and the concept of the triple threat: I draw on his work in Chapter 1.

> *In January of this year, I tell him about my research interests. Andy is interested but offers some advice as I am leaving his dressing room, suggesting that I share a selection of my knowledge and findings about the industry but that I should not tell 'them' everything.*
>
> (Mr A. Ford 2014, pers. comm. 4 January 2014)

Andy's comment exposes the need to ensure that the industry continues to be understood as an enigma to those who view it from the outside. Nelson asserts that "[s]ome artists hold that their work is intuitive and to engage in critical reflection upon it would be to extinguish the creative spark" (2013: p.33). Reflecting on the title of McAuley's book (2012), *Not Magic But Work*, Andy's utterance might be understood as an impulse to keep hidden the 'work' of the process, revealing only the 'magic' of performance. Through these affirmations, Quick, Ford, Nelson and McAuley indicate that some performers resist being wholly transparent concerning the specificity of their performance processes. This is an interesting provocation and I discuss its significance here, proposing a connection to vocational musical theatre training and highlighting how this inquiry will generate original insights into the triple threat training experience.

I find this trait–the performer's disinclination for discussion about their practice–particularly interesting. Considering questions of articulation in relation to the practice-heavy process of the ArtsEd training accentuates the importance of pinpointing methodological choices, appropriate to the particularities of the topic and the field, and the need for these to be applied responsibly and responsively. PaR, and its continuing development, supports, values, and progresses the function of practice in scholarly work and challenges conventional ways of knowing. The principles of PaR and ethnography resonate particularly clearly with questions around performers and articulation: used together these approaches offers suitable ways in which this aspect of the inquiry can be addressed.

Nelson points out that in a PaR inquiry practice is usually supported and enhanced by additional material in the form of "documentation and complementary writings". (2013: p.20) More specifically, discussing the practitioner-researcher's approach to their account of process in scholarly work, he suggests that, along with using a first-person narrative, it may be that "more gestural poetic modes of expression are useful in this aspect of the complementary writing in the attempt to articulate in words what is ultimately better danced" (Nelson, 2013: p.35). Whilst Nelson confirms that he is not against words or text, he suggests that we stop imbuing words with transparency and an ability to transfer knowledge immediately (2013: p.22). As Nelson

points out, Susan Melrose (2005) has written saliently about the practitioner and the theoretical writer's "*expert-intuitive* leap" (2013: p. 33, italics in original), in doing so encouraging the theory/practice and writing/fabrication binaries to be dispelled and raising vital questions regarding epistemic assumptions. Ethnography, too, necessitates careful consideration regarding the nature of cultural behaviour, challenging assumptions that conclusions can be drawn from solely asking questions (Hymes, 1981: p.84).This is reinforced by Blommaert and Jie: "asking is indeed very often the worst possible way of trying to find out" (2010: p.3). This assertion is particularly relevant when investigating musical theatre training, in which the body is privileged as an instrument through which to communicate, and a substantial amount of time is spent in either disciplined silence or voicing the words of others: training is not (necessarily) articulated, but embodied.

The use of the trained, expert body as a preferential tool through which to communicate is highlighted by Struan Leslie who states: "dancers move because they can't talk and when they talk they have to talk in metaphor" (University of Leeds: 2013). This notion has been expanded upon by Dale Johnston (2006) in his study on the effects of classical ballet pedagogy, and I draw on this in Chapter 3. In this thesis I explore how becoming a member of the training culture influences the performer in terms of their vocal and physical articulation in training and beyond, and consider how this might be understood to affect perceptions of the vocationally trained musical theatre performer. Is there a link between the apparent reluctance showed by performers to verbalise their activities and the methods used by vocational training systems? By scrutinising approaches to articulation within the ArtsEd training setting, I aim to address this feature in relation to the musical theatre performer, in doing so adding to Quick, Nelson, McAuley, and Johnston's conclusions. On the development of a crystallized framework, Ellingson stresses that "[t]he [research] question must determine the method" (2009: p.176): using a crystallized approach I explore these questions appositely and sensitively, negotiating, too, the culture of semi-silence outlined in this introduction.

Lastly, it is important to note that, over the last twelve years, a number of 'how to' manuals about musical theatre practice have been published. Kate Napier explores the value of written material in training in her paper, 'Integration and performance: the usefulness of books in musical theatre training' (2008: pp. 283-293), raising an important question as to the function of publications that aim to 'teach (about) training' on a practical level. It is useful to consider some of Napier's assertions here to further position my research. She notes the significance of the

publication of three books – all of which were released in 2008 within three months of each other – offering students and teachers instruction in the practices of musical theatre. Of the trio, Taylor's *Singing for Musicals: A Practical Guide* features as the only British publication: Tracey Moore and Allison Bergman's *Acting the Song: Performance Skills for Musical Theatre* and Joe Deer and Rocco Dal Vera's *Acting in Musical Theatre: A Comprehensive Course* are both published in the United States. I further consider published training guides in Chapter One, but I will draw on Napier's thinking to make two important points in relation to this thesis.

Although she makes clear that none of the authors suggest that their guides might act as a substitute for the training process, Napier underlines some concerns (2008: p.289). First, the fact that training is, fundamentally, a social and collaborative process results in questions being raised as to how useful these guides might be for the single reader (Napier, 2008: pp.286-288). Extending this argument, I argue that this social, collaborative process reaches well beyond the studio and into the wider training environment, and the training process transcends the learning of technical and interpretive skills. Moreover, as Napier points out: "No book can substitute for the developmental, personal interaction between teachers and students, and the experiential knowledge-base of the teacher is unlikely ever to be a perfect match for the pedagogy offered by a single volume" (2008: p.292). Secondly, the limitations of the print-based format are questioned by Napier who, whilst recognising that all three books use some formatting strategies to refine a wholly verbal explanation, asserts that a committed multimedia approach would make these printed pedagogies clearer and more accessible (2008: p.288-289). Since 2008, when Napier's paper was published, a handful more musical theatre training guides have been produced, such as those by Paul Harvard (2013) and Experience Bryon (2014). These examples could well aid the musical theatre performer and support a clearer understanding of (some) musical theatre practices–I draw on both publications in Chapter 1–and they contribute, too, to a developing training resource list for musical theatre. Neither, however, utilise "the potential offered by third millennium technology" envisaged by Napier (2008: p.292) and, some six years later, little appears to have changed. While the aim of my thesis is not to produce a training guide, in closely analysing the extended training environment, exploring the relationships between trainee and trainer, and, importantly, by presenting the work in a multimedia form, I build on Napier's work.

Thesis structure and scope

THE CURATED INTERFACES | *A prologue*[7]

CHAPTER 1 | PROBLEMATISING THE TRIPLE THREAT TRAINING

This chapter discusses the conceptualisation of the 'triple threat' and makes an important distinction between its use as a term to describe a performer and in referring to a particular kind of training. Tracing the origin of the term, its altering definitions as evidenced in musical theatre literature, and the prevalence of the term in musical theatre training course descriptions, the first of four themes–(a lack of) specificity–is explored. Three further themes are introduced to build a contextual picture of the triple threat performer and training. These are stigmatisation, separation, and shifting discourses. These themes raise important questions about the varying interpretations of the 'triple threat' term, the acting/musical theatre binary, and the objectives of vocational training. Until very recently, academia has lacked representation from vocational training institutions and, whilst this trend appears to be shifting to include staff from these establishments, certain schools and colleges remain unrepresented. Performers, however, remain missing from this setting. I argue that the processes and practice of the triple threat in training (and in the industry) have been largely overlooked. This has not only led to false assumptions being made about the musical theatre performer's craft but precludes vital information about the culture of training and industry.

CURATED INTERFACE (1) | *Practising place as a mmemonic*

CHAPTER 2 | EMBODYING THE ENVIROMENTAL ENVELOPE: THINKING THROUGH THE SENSES

Chapter 2 begins with an analogy of a cocoon. Using this interpretation I unpack the ArtsEd locale, arguing the significance of the interactional relationship between members of this training culture and the sensory environment. It examines the effects of the sonic and visual setting of training as experienced by those within it before turning to consider training as a multisensorial experience, depicting a sensory model detailing a range of sociocultural and environmental norms. Highlighting specific examples of these norms both inside and outside the training

[7] The prologue (which follows this introduction) serves as an introduction to the *Curated Interfaces*: hence I do not elaborate on their scope at this point.

studio, I investigate the interconnectedness of musical theatre practice and a heightened sensory awareness, thinking about how this is encouraged through the pedagogy at the school. Finally, I consider how the particularities of this training environment might be understood to impact and influence the trainee and what it may mean to inhabit a setting that is, characteristically, so sensorially intense.

CURATED INTERFACE (2) | *Sensing (shadows) in the studio*

CHAPTER 3 | CREATING TRAINING, TRAINING CREATIVITY

Chapter 3 considers the role of creativity within musical theatre training. I begin by questioning a claim that suggests conservatoire students lack creativity in comparison to university students, contending that a contextualised investigation of vocational training practices aids a clearer, more nuanced understanding as to how creativity may be functioning in the triple threat training process. The nebulosity of creativity's definition and the implications of the term and its use in the context of the musical theatre industry are explored before focusing on the notion of 'the creative process'. Here I employ Wallas' (1926) seminal model of the creative process to analyse a selection of the pedagogical approaches evidenced at ArtsEd to demonstrate how creativity can be recognised to be working in training. Building on my earlier findings about the performer-training-industry loop I identify how the term 'creative process' is used in relation to theatre and performance practice, considering how this definition translates to the training process at ArtsEd. From the case study data, I pinpoint two key pedagogical objectives: the first targets the development of strong musical theatre technique and the second aims to teach (what I will call) 'the seven standards'. These critical factors provide the foundations upon which the triple threat performer is built.

CURATED INTERFACE (3) | *Talking back to training*

CHAPTER 4 | THE ETHICS OF TRAINING

This chapter investigates matters of ethics in training, highlighting and seeking to answer important questions about the responsibility of training as it prepares young people for a career trajectory likely to involve risk, uncertainty, discrimination and precarity. I consider the 'breaking' method, briefly outlining the impact of the teacher-trainee relationship to draw attention to the high stakes nature of training before considering the audition process as a high stakes game.

Drawing on my ArtsEd case study and recent theatre and performance studies literature, I consider high-stakes testing to demonstrate how a 'hidden curriculum' operates in training to project and normalise certain industry characteristics and conditions; explore the training process as a process of aesthetic labour; and utilise Seton's description of the performer's "habitual vulnerability" (2010), reflecting on how this problematic notion is reflected in training. Evidencing clear shifts in pedagogical approaches at ArtsEd, I suggest that training ideologies are beginning to shift as the mental and physical welfare of the performer are being recognised as vitally important, resulting in a progressive training system which is embracing holistic values.

CURATED INTERFACE (4) | *Someday Just Began: a documented installation*

A word about language

In this thesis, the terms 'performer' and 'practitioner' are used interchangeably. When referring to a person enrolled in a training programme, 'student' and 'trainee' are also used and, referring to staff members in the training institution, the terms 'teacher' and 'trainer' are employed. The pronoun 'she' is also used when referring to the triple threat performer and when discussing the researcher. Although 'they' could be used in its singular form, the term is also bound up with its plural meaning, that is, to refer to two or more people. To refer to 'he or she' would reinforce a traditional gender binary and could exclude those who identify differently from accessing the work. In addition, from my own feminist perspective, the use of (s)he is problematic and is, also, stylistically, a little clunky. Self-identifying as a 'she' and 'her', I use these pronouns to enable a connection to be made between the 'I' existing in the autoethnographic *Curated Interfaces* and the 'she' or 'her' who is written into the ethnographic analyses within the four chapters, the researcher and the researched, to link the past, to the present, to the future, and to support a sense of a journey. British English spelling has been used throughout, however, quotations containing American English spelling have not been changed.

THE CURATED INTERFACES | *A Prologue*

> Time, and experience influence perspective, hence events under study are in temporal transition.
> (Clandinin and Connelly, 2006: p.479)

A three year-old girl stands centre stage in the school hall at St Brandon's school. She wears a beige Villager dress, covered in tiny flowers, with a Peter Pan collar. On her head is a hairband with a pair of cardboard donkey ears attached and at the back of her dress hangs a homemade woollen donkey tail. She opens her mouth and begins to sing: "Get along, you lazy Ferdinando, we must leave the shade of the olive tree… ."

The eleven year-old holds the telephone receiver to her ear and, dutifully responding to the urgent, whispered prompts of her headteacher, she tells the Bristol Evening Post reporter that she wants to be the next Kate Adie.

John asks me to go and do the washing up. I am unsure as to whether this is a genuine request or part of my acting lesson, but I make my way through the archway and into the small kitchen. Picking up a dishcloth from the full washing up bowl, I begin to clean a plate as John instructs from the lounge: "Now, just start your speech, would you?"

I take the sheet music for a song with me to my rep(ertoire) lesson and ask Huw to "put it down" on my dictaphone. He has not come across the little-known musical, Is There Life After High School?, or the song, "The Kid Inside", before and asks if he can hold onto 'the dots' to make a copy of it.

Taking a deep breath, I click 'send' to forward my carefully written email. Just a few minutes later, a return email arrives in my inbox: "Hi Janine[,] How brilliant (…)! Next Wednesday afternoon is fine (…). Let me know what time is best for you. Chris Hocking."

"All beginnings contain an element of recollection" (Connerton, 1989: p.6). An attempt to consider how I came to autoethnography and made decisions as to how to represent the story of and the stories within this work triggers an array of memories. For as long as I can remember, I have made sense of my experiences through narrative; therefore, as F. Michael Connolly and D. Jean Clandinin affirm: "it makes sense to study the world narratively" (2000: p.17). Beginning my MA (Performance Research) at the University of Bristol in 2012, I was required to introduce myself–to my peers, to the academic staff, to visiting teachers–to describe my journey up to that point, to contextualise my-self. I had been harbouring a weighty fear that, in returning to

academic study, I would lose my identity as a performer. It took very little time indeed, however, for me to realise that I was in no danger of this happening. In fact, if anything at all, I felt *more* like a performer. In this new and different environment, I began to recognise how I embody a state of trainedness and how this manifests itself: not, I hope, as a charisma accessory (Shepherd & Gough, 2009), but in the embodiment of other characteristics and traits. These features are multifarious but, some particular examples include: a heightened awareness of body language; well-developed kinaesthetic awareness; punctuality; discipline; respect for/responsiveness to the dynamic(s) of a space or place; perfectionism; resilience; superstitious tendencies (but only in relation to theatre) and, to borrow Anne Dennis's (1995) term, an "articulate body". I remember feeling particularly reliant on the final item of this list – an articulate body – trusting my body as a medium of expression and a way of knowing.

I came to my master's degree armed with a host of unanswered questions, many of which related to the training and industry culture(s) to which I belonged. Seduced by the rich bodies of literature belonging to theatre and performance studies and nudged by the enquiring minds of teachers and coursemates, my many questions increased in number. They centered on notions of vocation, education, ethics, experience, practice, articulation, identity, control, memory, documentation, embodiment, and on (what I have come to describe in this thesis as) the performer-training-industry loop. "Who would make a better subject than a researcher consumed by wanting to figure it all out?" (Ellis, 1991: p.30).

In December 2012, I attended my first academic symposium at Arnolfini, Bristol. 'Redux' investigated artists returning to their own archives and was the second component of a three-strand, three year, research-council-funded project, Performing Documents, led by Professor Simon Jones. I find it an exhilarating, energising, edifying, exhausting experience. During the morning coffee break, I sit in the café with my MA cohort–Andi, Phillippa, Sachi and Ben–aware but unable to suppress my new-found academic fannishness at witnessing keynote speaker, Amelia Jones, in the flesh, and being able to put a face, body, and voice to a name and a brain. I am particularly gripped by the way in which performance practice intersects a number of the papers, by the performative nature of some of the presentations. I am lured by Graeme Rose's evocative analogy of performance(s) as a love affair and especially convinced by Claire MacDonald's lucid account of her own performance practice. A few weeks later, I draw on MacDonald's work validate my own thinking about the place of the personal in my work:

> "When studying critically should one attempt to steer away from an attachment to the personal? It is a notion hard to escape; in one sense, it seems impossible. In her presentation, Performing with Ghosts (Redux, Arnolfini, 8 December 2012), Claire MacDonald introduced the notion that "to say 'I' is never abstract, subjectivity is always written on the body". Perhaps one might go so far as to replace the word 'written' with 'tattooed'. Surely this subjectivity is written in indelible ink, a permanent inscription which can be added to and even layered, but never erased, evidence of past time and experiences like tree rings in dendrochronology? Reassured by tutors and discoveries in my own research, such as Ionesco's suggestion, "it is perhaps only through subjectivity that we become objective" (1964: p.29 in McAuley, 2000: p.12), I embarked on an inquiry based on the empirical, placed within a critical framework."

Following this, I continued to draw personal experience into my work, whilst being aware of a niggling concern about the fact that I felt obliged to preface this work with a somehow apologetic statement of justification. The next year, autoethnography crossed my academic path and made its way into my ethnographic life.

My autoethnographic process has been influenced by many factors, some of which are likely to reside deep in the unconscious mind. My ongoing reading of eloquent and empassioned autoethnographic accounts and around practices of autoethnography has, undoubtedly, inspired the development of my own practice. In the main body of the interfaces I refer explicitly to a number of the brilliant scholarly sources that have been a guide and an inspiration. This thesis is framed as a 'journey', however, I have approached it using Richardson's (2005) philosophy: there is no fixed destination and the stories represent a journey of becoming. The process of collecting material for this journey began long before this research project was realised and the journey itself, I hope, will continue beyond the confines of this thesis.

Investigating our tendency to discursively 'box' musical theatre, Dominic Symonds (2014) suggests that this compartmentalisation and vertical positioning of certain disciplinary roles, skills and activities might limit a clear understanding of musical theatre. Symonds presents a selection of dynamics, suggesting that the "intrinsic qualities of the material that we use to put together musical theatre (…) characterise the (…) 'soup' of the musical stage": these are music; physicality; relationships; effect; collaboration; integration; and immersion (2014: p.8). I propose that these features characterise and are developed through the process of training. Furthermore, in this thesis, I augment Symonds list–adding memory, feeling, embodiment and multisensoriality–and argue that it is important, too, for our understanding of the practice of musical theatre (training) not to be limited by the representational form of its analysis, i.e. text.

Consequently, the *Curated Interfaces* function to find different ways in which to communicate this journey through training. I ask you, the reader, to recognise this thesis as a document that performs and use it as a gateway to an experiential understanding of musical theatre training.

Representation and purpose: approaching *The Curated Interfaces*

In the *Curated Interfaces*, I utilise three contexts, which differ in time and place. In addition, a list of tasks from the PaR workshops conducted with ArtsEd musical theatre graduates is documented, and written cues are provided which direct you to the audio and audiovisual files. Positioned alongside each other, these fragmented elements of varying contexts are presented in multimedia and multigenre form. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had envisaged submitting a printed document accompanied by a USB memory stick containing the audio and audiovisual files, allowing the reader a material engagement with the work. The requirement to submit solely by electronic means has necessitated a change to the formatting so that the multimedia aspect of the thesis is able to function. To build on the details of the interfaces outlined in the Introduction, this component aims

- to simulate the transient nature of memory whilst exploring, too, the ways in which the ArtsEd training experience can haunt graduates' lives;
- to utilise memory as a resource to probe training experiences and inform and enrich the auto/ethnographic research process;
- to touch "'a world beyond the self of the writer" (Ellis and Bochner, 1996: p.24);
- to reflect the training experience, research process and interactions with the research findings as social, collaborative, embodied, sensorial processes, characterised by polyvocality and (re)activated by the reader.

A compositional and contextual key

THE FIRST CONTEXT

was set within the periods of fieldwork at ArtsEd: in this setting I narrate my experience as an auto/ethnographer-ArtsEd graduate and share excerpts from my research diary.

THE SECOND CONTEXT

occurred about fifteen years ago and (mostly) focuses on time during which I was a musical theatre student at ArtsEd. (Occasionally, I draw on more distant memories.)

THE TASKS

detail the practice-as-research activities undertaken by ArtsEd graduates.

THE THIRD CONTEXT

relates material created during and around the practice-as-research workshops.

Audio/audiovisual files:
These prompts guide you to interact with the audio and audiovisual material.

CHAPTER ONE | PROBLEMATISING THE TRIPLE THREAT TRAINING

Those outside the musical theatre profession commonly ask professional musical theatre performers: "What are you best at?" and "So you're a singer (or) dancer (or) actor?" Responses to this query may include: a simple affirmation; clarification that the performer is involved in all three of these activities; confirmation from the practitioner that they have undertaken musical theatre training; and the performer relaying an autobiographical narrative as to how each of the disciplines were encountered and in which order, leaving the questioner to take from this what they will. These answers appear to be straightforward and unproblematic, but by unpicking both call and response the concept of the triple threat performer is brought to the fore. In the question, the asker introduces a distinct need for the performer, in answering, to identify and prioritise one of the three practices or vocations, in doing so creating a hierarchy of her own abilities.

Questions of this nature are not indicative of a challenge for all musical theatre practitioners: some performers are more experienced or drawn to one of the three disciplines and may be willing to articulate a preferential practice. Whilst this questioning could signify the asker's recognition of the triple threat's challenging objective–in simple terms, to achieve mastery of three markedly different skills–I argue that this demand for the performer to order her skills evidences a fundamental lack of understanding of the musical theatre performer and her practice. In responding to the aforementioned questions, the performer is likely either to surrender to the request and to specify a 'preferred' skill or role or to identify herself as a 'triple threat' artist. Proclaiming oneself a triple threat, however, is not the norm and could be considered as socially unacceptable behaviour: by self-identifying in this way, the practitioner risks being labelled as immodest or arrogant. It is usually another person who accredits and names the musical theatre performer as a triple threat and, as a result, the performer is imbued with a certain status and sense of prestige.

However, it is not my intention to project blame onto whoever asks questions of this sort, but to use this example to draw attention to a phenomenon–the triple threat–which has become clouded by its unstable and ambiguous definition. In contrast to the

perspective which hierarchises the musical theatre disciplines and the performer's skills is the somewhat nebulous perception that describes a practice in which the skills are fused: "the idea of three in one, a triple threat performer who blended them all" (Sudhalter, 2002 cited in Symonds, 2014, p.4). This view oversimplifies the concept, overlooking the challenges that arise in synthesising these disciplines. Describing this model of integration as "the melting pot metaphor", Michael Ellison explains that this analogy "subsumes all differences and the individuality of parts in favor of homogenous elements; the result is not a fabric of many brilliant interwoven colors which enhance each other, but rather grey cloth (1994, p.217). Nevertheless, the grail sought after by musical theatre performers, training institutions and industry alike, arguably, now more than ever, is the highly competent triple threat practitioner.

What constitutes a triple threat performer and our understanding of the term is important because it offers vital insights into ideologies of training, the culture of musical theatre performance practice and the changing nature of the label which continues to dominate the discursive construction of the musical theatre performer. In investigating the triple threat and musical theatre training I unravel both historical and contemporary strands of the concept, exposing four telling themes that set the contextual scene for this work. These are:

1. (a lack of) specificity;
2. stigmatisation;
3. separation;
4. shifting discourses.

It is these themes which lead the following discussion. I consider the evolving concept of the triple threat, thinking about the shifting identity of the multi-skilled performer and her expanding abilities and the connotations of the term when used in reference to institutional settings, i.e., to describe vocational training courses and/or the types of performers they produce. Reflecting on a performer training event allows me to interrogate the relationship between performers and institutions and explore evidence that suggests the long-standing binary nature of the academy and the conservatoire is, within higher education theatrical study and training in the year 2021, becoming less defined. I then focus on the antithetic qualities that contribute to the triple threat

performer being portrayed as both stigma and success before investigating the complexities presented by musical theatre, a genre that draws together three disciplines. Following this, I address the significance of discourse and how this might operate around the triple threat and her training, considering: the chosen sources for this research; how the term 'discourse' is interpreted to support an investigation of triple threat training; and the (inter)disciplinary identity of musical theatre. Finally, I elucidate how the matters of this chapter drive the inquiry and shape one of the key aims of this work: that is, to better understand the triple threat's practice and triple threat training through a contextualised study of the performer within the training culture.

(Lack of) specificity: defining the 'triple threat' performer and training

In this section I consider the historical usage of the term 'triple threat', examining its emergence and evolvement within documentation and investigating how this has impacted our understanding of the concept. I draw attention to two different readings of the term before focusing on the objectives of triple threat training. The latter is particularly significant: I suggest that there is a lack of specificity in much of the documentation that refers to the triple threat performer and probing two institutions' triple threat courses reveal marked differences in their approaches.

Historical usage and interpretations of the term

Tracing the etymology of the term 'triple threat' in a British context, an early use of the phrase is located in the form of a situational reference to a chess piece within a chess game, found in an article published in 1907 within *The British Chess Magazine* (*What is the origin*, 2016). In a US context, the earliest examples of the expression are found relating to sport–more specifically, to professional American football and the description of a player who can run, pass and kick–appearing in newspaper articles dating back to 1916 (ibid.). Similarly, the term has been used in basketball parlance, referring to a position assumed by the player which allows to either pass, shoot or dribble (Mateus et al., 2015). Barry Popik (2013) notes that historical usage of the term in entertainment can be detected at its earliest in the early 1930 within an American newspaper article describing actress, Evelyn Daw, "a triple threat leading lady who sings, dances and acts" (*Syracuse Herald*, 1937 cited in Popik, 2013). Popik turns to another American newspaper article, written a year later, in which the initial meaning of the phrase is completely reversed.

Presenting in the form of a humorous joke, this interpretation describes a performer who has very little skill in any of the three areas of singing, dancing and acting: "She's a triple-threat entertainer. She can't sing, she can't dance, she can't act" (Ross, 1938 cited in Popik, 2013). Whereas in both its original and contemporary guises, the 'threat' posed by the practitioner might be assumed to be one that affects the success of their fellow performers as they fight for employment, in this alternative context, we might suppose that the performer who lacks proficiency will be more of a threat to the senses of the expectant, judgmental body that is the audience.[1] There is minimal proof that this secondary, jocose framing has lasted, although its presence at the time indicates that the earlier meaning of the triple threat was widespread: it must have been firmly established in order for the second definition to be comic. Indications of the triple threat being delineated as a multi-skilled artist, however, can be found dotted through documentation of the 20th and 21st centuries, and the term is fast becoming ubiquitous within British, American and Australian realms of musical theatre discourse.

The shifting identity of the triple threat performer

Numerous references to the triple threat can be found in texts about musical theatre. A number of these mention American-born Jerome Robbins (1918-1988), famed dancer, choreographer, director and theatre producer. Robbins is credited for the 'real' birth of the triple threat performer with the launch of his 1957 musical, *West Side Story*, which required performers who could sing, dance and act (Brockett et al., 2016; Symonds and Taylor, 2013; Summers, 2004). Frances Yeoh also credits Robbins, along with Bob Fosse, with the cultivation of the 'integrated' musical and the development of the triple threat performer. (2013: p.43) Augmenting this notion, choreographer Graciela Daniele comments: "Still for me today the show was what the glory of musical theatre could be – where you put all these arts together and dance becomes not only entertainment but part of telling the story" (Daniele in Grody and Lister, 1996: p.156). Zachary Dunbar agrees that the original Broadway production of *West Side Story* "involved an exceptional integration of the Arts" as the story "seems to be conveyed equally through text, music and song" (2012, p.207). Daniele and Dunbar's assertions, particularly, bring to the fore the contested notion of 'integration' or 'the integrated musical': largely understood to

[1] In his consideration of the use of the term 'triple threat' within the Australian musical theatre industry, Derek Bond, however, aligns with Alt's understanding of the phrase (Alt, 2004: p.389): "the word 'threat' is used in this expression in an ironic sense, indicating that the actor is equally skilled in three areas" (2010: p.61).

refer to musicals in which "songs, dances and narratives work in parallel towards the same dramatic end" (Taylor, 2012: p.55). I suggest that the references above can be understood to mark *West Side Story* as significant for two reasons: first, Robbins' use of physical communication and dramatic choreography to create and drive the narrative of the piece; secondly, and as a consequence of the first factor, the musical's requirement for triple threat performers. In musical theatre historiography, the juncture at which integration first occurred has also been assigned to Kern and Hammerstein's *Showboat* (1927)–thirty years earlier than *West Side* Story–or more commonly to Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* (1943) (Wolf, 2008: p.7). Whilst the scope of this study ensures that the focus remains on the performer, the concept of the 'integrated musical' has been fruitfully discussed by others.[2]

Napier (2008) makes an important connection that draws a link yet distinguishes between the integrated musical and the triple threat performer. She points out "the inexorable movement since *Oklahoma!* (1943) has been towards serving the integrated material through a single cast able to deliver all the elements of performance: towards the ideal of the 'triple threat' performer" (Napier, 2008: p.285).[3] Furthermore, Napier suggests that conservatoire training–I attend to contemporary triple threat training shortly–has been directly influenced by the characteristics of the integrated musical (ibid.): this assertion is important in relation to this work as it evidences the performer-training-industry loop at work. *Oklahoma*–the musical which Napier claims is the driving force behind the turn to the paragon of the triple threat–with its Dream Ballet at the end of Act 1, might be considered the ideal opportunity to cast triple threat performers in the roles of Curly and Laurey. However, it took until 1998 and the West End revival of the musical at the National Theatre, London: Curly, played by Hugh Jackman, and Laurey, played by ArtsEd-trained Josefina Gabrielle, were the first performers in history to dance their own dream counterparts. In *West Side Story*, Carol Lawrence originated the role of Maria in the Broadway production of *West Side Story* (1957). Alongside co-star, Chita Rivera, who created the role of Anita, Lawrence has been identified as a triple threat and is also

[2] Millie Taylor provides some useful thinking around this idea (2009; 2012), as does Dan Rebellato (2009) and, also, Ben Macpherson in his consideration of "the mythology of integration" (2011: pp.30-37).

referred to with the term 'triple crown' (ref.)[4] The liner notes of her music album, *Tonight at 8:30* (1960), details how

> Carol Lawrence stands out among the most gifted triple-threat performers on the Broadway stage today. When the full force of her talents burst on Broadway in her first top role - Maria in WEST SIDE STORY- the critics and public unanimously sensed that rare fourth imension [sic] of temperament, timing, and magnetism known as "star quality". WST [sic] SIDE STORY opened with great acclaim for all who were connected with the production, but the critics saved their biggest plaudits for the brilliant performer playing Maria.

It is relevant to note that this description in praise of Lawrence endows her with a fourth attribute: like 'triple threat', 'star quality' is another attribute which is subject to varying interpretations, but in this reference to Lawrence it is depicted as "temperament, timing, and magnetism" (ibid.) Interestingly and, somewhat controversially, Lawrence was overlooked for the role of Maria in the film version of *West Side Story* (1961): instead, 23-year old Natalie Wood, already an established actress having started out as a child star and progressing through teenage roles to leading female roles, was cast. Although Wood carried significant status as an actress, her singing voice was not considered strong enough for the role and was dubbed by soprano and ghost singer, Marni Nixon. Other vocal substitutions included Jim Bryant singing for Richard Beymer's Tony and Nixon and Betty Wand part-dubbing the vocals for Rita Moreno's Anita. Highlighting the practice of dubbing singing voices in historical musicals points to a requirement for the musical theatre performer to possess a certain level of vocal skills, alongside her abilities in acting and dance.

The casting of Natalie Wood over triple threat Carol Lawrence as Maria raises important questions about industry culture and how performers and their labour is valued and credited. Wood can be recognised to have possessed a different kind of star quality to that which is described of Lawrence: Wood's noteworthy celebrity status is likely to have been an appealing characteristic affecting both potential audiences and, consequently, the film's commercial success. It is pertinent to note that Wood *could* sing–this much is evident in archival recordings–although the act of replacing her vocals with those of Marni Nixon informs us that her singing voice was not considered to meet the required

[4] The second description originated in the mid-19th century in the sport of horse-racing and details the act of winning three prestigious races. The term has been used in a transferred sense to refer to a number of competitive ventures, usually in the field of sport.

standard for the role. A connection can be made between Wood's apparent lack of musical ability and the lack of documented specificity about the level of skill that the practitioner is expected to demonstrate in each of the disciplines which constitute musical theatre practice: later in this section I demonstrate how this lack of detail continues to characterise the hazy notion of the triple threat performer today.

Alternative descriptors of the triple threat performer cloud the possible formation of a single, stable understanding of the term through history. Returning briefly to consider Jerome Robbins is a case in point: Robbins, himself, has been depicted as a triple threat, identified as such through his work as a dancer, and as a choreographer of both ballets and musicals (Duberman, 2008: p.443). Dunbar notes the wide-ranging abilities of the *West Side Story* creative team, in doing so, adding another strand to Robbins' skillset (2013):

> Stephen Sondheim (lyricist, but elsewhere a composer), Leonard Bernstein (composer, but also a conductor/educator), Jerome Robbins (choreographer, but elsewhere a director), and Arthur Laurents (librettist, but elsewhere a playwright). (p.207)

Referencing Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly as examples of the original triple threat, McLean suggests a new understanding of the label developed during the 1950s when stars such as Sinatra, Presley and Boone joined the performance circuits, finding success "in movies, as a nightclub performer, and as a recording artist" (2010: p.223). Like Robbins, Gene Kelly is noted to have succeeded in being both the triple threat that is the actor/singer/dancer but, also, in crossing over to create an identity as a creative, directing and co-directing some of his films (ibid: p.223). These claims of varying expertise can be recognised to have shifted with the passage of time: the changing of the term can be identified to reflect changing industries. These differing interpretations, I believe, contribute towards the mystification and, possibly, the misunderstanding that surrounds the triple threat performer.

Just as divergent interpretations of the triple threat of the early to mid-20th century can be sourced, references detailing various understandings of the modern triple threat can also be found. Investigating current conceptions and usage of the term 'triple threat' adds to this developing conceptual picture. When speaking of the performer, the simplest explanation for the phrase describes a practitioner who can sing, dance, and act

(Marthers and Marthers, 2015: p.299). A development of this details the performer who is able to perform these skills *well* (Harris, 2016: pp.2-3, my italics). A similar description is recorded by Tebbutt (2003: p.6), with both Tebbutt and Harris furthering their definitions with the requirement for the performer to have the ability to perform all three disciplines simultaneously. Napier asserts that conservatoire training reflects this in its aim "to deliver to and establish in their students high levels of technical accomplishment in the three distinct performance disciplines of singing, acting and dance" (2008: p.287). An apparent lack of detail in these explanations of the triple threat raises questions about levels of ability and uncovers a need to untangle a practice that pulls together three disciplines and their skills. I investigate the level, balance and integration of these skills along with the term's connotations later in this chapter and these ideas are further developed throughout the thesis.

Evidence of the shifting identity of the triple threat performer can be found in descriptions that sketch out an expanding role. Derek Bond asserts that "with specialized training now available, a 'triple threat' actor is expected to possess music skills" (2010: p.61), although it could be argued that this has always been a requirement, but that it is now becoming more apparent due to pedagogical developments. The value of these skills and approaches to learning them within a training environment are considered later in the work. The 'quadruple threat' has also surfaced, depicting the artist who can not only sing, dance and act but is also a skilled musician (usually being able to play to a professional standard) (Evans, 2014), dubbed within the industry as an "actor-muso". Unlike the performer Bond (2010) describes, for whom reading music and having a knowledge of the traditional elements of music, the ability to learn her music by playing a melody or harmony line on the keyboard and to play a basic chord accompaniment to the musical number being learned offers her a distinct advantage (2010: p61), the skills of this 'quadruple threat' may secure employment as onstage actor-musicians. In recent years, training courses specifically designed to develop professional actor-musicians have been implemented at a number of vocational training institutions and universities. Like the triple threat term, the quadruple threat is subject to various interpretations. On the casting of Mel Brook's 2007 Broadway musical, *Young Frankenstein*, Susan Stroman declares, "you have to be a real quadruple threat now to be in theater. You have to sing, you have to dance, you have to act, and you have to be funny" (Stroman in Bryer and Davison, 2005), suggesting a need for the performer to also be a comedian/comedienne.

Eric Branscome points to fresh innovations in musical theatre productions affecting the existing triple threat stereotype, mentioning recent examples of the requirement for actors to play instruments and perform stage combat (2014: p.43). Branscome goes on to suggest that actors may find themselves needing to "seek additional training that will prepare them for an increasingly diverse range of performance expectations" (ibid: p.23). This provokes a question aside from the possible need for performers to invest in further training, regarding the effect this call for a wider skillset may have on musical theatre training, and whether vocational courses will change in response to these happenings in the industry. In an interview, Chris Hocking, Principal and Director of the School of Musical Theatre at ArtsEd, uncovers a fourth strand which is the performer's look (Hocking, 2015). I expand upon the controversial issue of aesthetics and appearance in the musical theatre environment in Chapter 4. Hocking also reveals a developing fifth thread–a focus on acting for screen and television–set to become a "unique selling point" for the ArtsEd (BA) Hons Musical Theatre course (ibid): this add-on not only reinforces the triple threat as a shifting phenomenon, but also develops an already established pattern of triple threat training and performer as a commodifiable brand.

In continuing to direct attention to contemporary training, the promise of the 'triple threat training' is rife across institutional marketing materials. A prevalent term in musical theatre training prospectuses which advertise programmes that range from full time drama school courses:

> Use our triple threat training to become an outstanding musical theatre performer. (ArtsEd, 2016)

> "The objective of our courses is to prepare students for employment in the entertainment industry as 'triple threat' musical theatre performers…" (Laine Theatre Arts, 2014)

To short taster programmes:

> Experience three-weeks of triple-threat musical theatre training at one of the UK's top musical theatre drama schools. (Mountview, 2015)

To degree courses run within a university setting:

> The three year BA (Hons) Musical Theatre is a 'triple threat' style programme, with a balanced mix of dance, acting and singing, and quite a heavy practical timetable. (University of Chichester, 2016)

> The course provides 'triple threat' specialist vocational training to nurture and develop the practical skills required for a career in musical theatre. (University of Chester, 2018)

This illustrates how the term 'triple threat' has become dominant in online and printed prospectuses advertising musical theatre courses. With an extensive list of schools, colleges and universities offering musical theatre training–many of these specifying that they provide triple threat programmes–it becomes difficult to pinpoint a dominant method or to define a communal, cross-institutional goal for musical theatre training. Furthermore, there is only a limited amount that can be deduced from website content; this information is often shaped by university administrators and marketing staff and, although Consumer Protection Law necessitates descriptions that accurately match the practice which they describe, I argue that this information is markedly subjective. Additionally, whilst some of these courses are accredited by organisations such as the Federation of Drama Schools, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, many operate without these endorsements. Consequently, in thinking further about musical theatre courses and the ways in which they interpret the concept of the 'triple threat', I consider two institutions that offer triple threat training, ArtsEd and The University of Chichester, referring to data collected from interviews with the course leaders. Initially, the focus here is placed on the two establishments, followed by a shift to centre on ArtsEd–the institution at the centre of my case study–to consider notions of vocationalism and excellence with regard to the triple threat.

The triple threat in contemporary training courses

Whilst in the examples above the term features as a descriptor within a larger body of text that provides course information, the University of Chichester includes the idiom in its course title, "BA (Hons) Musical Theatre (Triple Threat)" (University of Chichester, 2016). Karen Howard, Programme Co-ordinator and Senior Lecturer in Musical Theatre at Chichester explains that this programme qualifies as the inaugural course which has,

subsequently, been followed by a number of other courses in musical theatre, some of which have been set up by the Music Department. Alternative pathways at Chichester include: a BA (Hons) Musical Theatre Performance; BA (Hons) Music with Musical Theatre; BA (Hons) Musical Theatre with Teaching; BA (Hons) Musical Theatre and Arts Development; and, in 2019 launched its BA (Hons) Musical Theatre and Cabaret Performance. Howard confirms "in order to clearly define each programme, this original which is the conservatoire model with equal weight in acting, singing and dance became known as Triple Threat to ensure its distinctive qualities" (K. Howard 2017, pers. comm. 25 July). On the training offered by ArtsEd, Hocking, too, describes a threefold course divided into equal disciplinary fractions (2015, pers. comm. 17 June). In defining the key feature of the advertised triple threat programmes, David Alt also stresses an equal emphasis on singing, acting, and dancing (2004: p.390). It is necessary to recognise that the expression 'triple threat' is being used to refer to two different concepts, made distinguishable by the word that follows it: 'performer' or 'training'. When it is related to training, the concept of the triple threat functions to describe a common structure of musical theatre programmes. However, similar to the descriptions of the triple threat performer cited earlier in this chapter, this structural definition suffers from a lack of specificity and a plethora of questions remain about the workings of triple threat performers and triple threat courses.

ArtsEd and Chichester may both offer a course in which the three traditional musical theatre disciplines are equally divided, but salient differences can be found between the two programmes and the establishments in which they are set. These include distinctions relating to geographical placement; the length of time for which each course has been running; and differing institutional identities, i.e. Chichester being recognised as a university and ArtsEd as a specialist training school. However, the distinction that is particularly important to address within the ambit of this chapter is that the two courses maintain dissimilar objectives.

Regarding the triple threat course at the University of Chichester, Howard explains that the faculty does not solely work towards the idea that each performer needs to be able to perform each skill at the same level. Instead, it is recognised that some students may excel at one particular skill and the training works to develop the performers by responding to their individual strengths: "There will be strong ensemble performers

emerging, good character actors and then the all three potentials. This is what makes the course so rich in quality" (K. Howard 2017, pers. comm. 25 July). In contrast, the objective of ArtsEd's musical theatre training is for all graduates of the course to be highly proficient at each skill. Hocking considers the "triple threat nature" of the ArtsEd musical theatre training is what makes it unique. More specifically, he comments on the singular focus of the course, articulating this as a necessity and driver for the success of the programme (Hocking, 2015):

> It is a programme specifically designed for people who show potential in all three areas. It is a professionally led programme. It is vocational. It is designed for people who want to go into the business, not for people who want to do something for three years and then go on to something else; it is single-minded to give people the best opportunities possible to go into a very, very tricky business… …You cannot go in, be a performer and have a backup plan, you can't, there can be no plan B. And this is what this is, a triple threat course… … It's got to be singly driven because of the challenges. I mean it's an incredibly, incredibly challenging programme. It is aimed for people to have a lasting career in theatre. (pers. comm. 17 June)

The aim at ArtsEd is to condense what would be learnt if one were to study a single discipline full-time, enabling three disciplines to be studied simultaneously. Defining this challenge perhaps serves to highlight one aspect of the overlooked rigour and intensity involved in musical theatre training, correcting the oft-assumed view that disciplines are, somehow, diluted for these programmes. Unlike other institutions, Hocking insists that it is crucial to concentrate on singing, dancing, and acting to give the course focus (as opposed to branching into choreography, teaching qualifications, and stagecraft, etc.).

In his 2004 paper exploring how triple threat and musical theatre training programmes might support the careers of graduates by providing comprehensive courses in sight reading music, Alt challenges the possibility of triple threat courses offering "equal excellence in all areas" (p.390), this owing to time pressure and staff and school specialisms affecting and shaping training (ibid). If ArtsEd are succeeding in achieving the 'equal excellence' that Alt describes, how, exactly, are they doing so? Revealing as the results of this inquiry may be, I argue that there is a need to document the effects of bringing together three disciplines and the challenges that this brings to both triple threat pedagogy and performer, past and present. In addition, it is important to consider the potential which lies in the development of institutional and industrial relationships as the triple threat gains more ground, and to think about how these connections could

influence the development of training and affect the evolving identity of the triple threat performer.

Stigmatisation: a divided history but a united future(?)

Over the last decade a dialogue between various institutions–academic, vocational and cultural–has been established.[5] Whilst this shift is positive, in my experience of attending events discussing musical theatre and training these conversations continue to be problematic and, despite connections being made between the different institutions, there is little to show for this developing relationship. In this section, I reflect on an event I attended at the University of Leeds in October 2013, attesting to concerns involving training, articulated by practitioners and educators. I then detail how the musical theatre performer suffers from a stigma, the result of which puts her at risk of being pigeon-holed: this gives rise to critical questions regarding the ethics of training and the industry, and emphasises the problematic connotations that can come with being identified as a musical theatre performer.

Organised by the Practitioner Processes Research Group (University of Leeds) and the Theatre, Dance and Performance Training Journal and chaired by Jonathan Pitches (University of Leeds) and Simon Murray (University of Glasgow), *Training in a Cold Climate* (from hereon *TCC*) initiated a three-hour-long, roundtable discussion on the present and future of performer training. Although the discussion did not centre on musical theatre training, much of the dialogue focused on the specificity of vocational drama school training and the profession into which it feeds. Speakers ultimately questioned the design of training in a 'cold climate'. This figurative term, open to interpretation, allowed speakers to share their own experiences of training. In doing so, each articulated contributory factors (be they institutional, political, pedagogical or otherwise) towards the training environment being stifled, resulting in what could be called a 'cold climate'. The diverse experiences of the contributors resulted in apposite insights being shared and, evidencing some of these alongside some specific concerns

[5] Events that I have attended in which these developing connections have been evidenced include: *We Said We Wouldn't Look Back: British Musical Theatre Research and Practice*, University of Winchester, 21 May 2016; *V&A Performance* Festival, Victoria and Albert Museum, 16-24 April 2016; and *Song, Stage and Screen IX: 'The Art of Collaboration in Musical Theatre'*, Sheridan College, Canada, 24-26 June 2014.

raised about training programmes, I highlight notions that directly relate to my own inquiry.

I start with an observation noted at the outset of the event. On being nominated to be the first presenter of the session, Struan Leslie exclaims, "Oh God! The least academically qualified person in the room; I want to get everybody up and get their shoes off and do stuff" (*TCC*: University of Leeds, 30 October 2013). Leslie has just left the Royal Shakespeare Company where he worked for five years establishing and developing the role of Head of Movement. Previous to this, he has spent twenty-five years working as a freelance practitioner. He identifies himself as a director, movement director, choreographer, devisor, performer and an educator. His seemingly impromptu disclaimer puts me in mind of a comparable incident I witnessed in a workshop with actor and dancer, Ankur Bahl. At the beginning of the session (which took place at the University of Bristol in March 2013), Bahl introduces himself as "just a performer" which, in the context of the event, perhaps sought to clarify that he did not wish to present himself as academic, researcher or to define himself with a commonly assumed combinative title, such as 'practitioner-researcher' or 'academic-practitioner'. The use of the word "just" appeared to diminish the importance of his profession, identity and status. These moments stimulate numerous questions: how does a performer value themselves? Does the nature of the theatre industry encourage a certain type of person or a particular way of behaving? What stopped Leslie from getting everyone up and facilitating the 'doing' of "stuff"? In their utterances both Leslie and Bahl (perhaps unwittingly) seem to be dumbing down their contributory capacity to the event by asserting themselves as practitioners. In doing so, they are also making light of what has been, until recently, a binary between university and vocational institution, academic and performer.

The concerns raised by the panelists indicated an outwardly unanimous view that performer training needs to be subjected to significant transformative changes. The speakers were, however, less forthcoming in presenting cogent solutions as to how these shifts might be introduced. Kylie Walsh, who trained at Bretton Hall, Leeds University and completed an MA in Theatre Collectives from the University of Chichester is co-founder, performer and outreach director for West Yorkshire based theatre company, The Paper Birds. Walsh expressed her concern about witnessing graduates with little theoretical knowledge, lacking the ability to analyse their own work, and articulated the

need to equip students with the tools to become sustainable creators of their own work. She affirmed that students were not seeing enough performance work and that their own performance practice needed to be supported by intellectual thought, suggesting that a solution to this might be found in the implementation of more post-show discussions for undergraduates. (Walsh, *TCC*: University of Leeds, 30 October 2013) This approach may prove successful in an academic institution, but stirs up queries about the function of 'purely' vocational training, in which practical skills are of utmost importance and often need to be privileged over theory (of the academic kind). In addition, it highlights the need for lucid aims and outcomes to be communicated from training institution to trainee and presents wider questions as to how an academic performance degree, in comparison to a degree from a conservatoire, equips a performer for a career in the professional performance industry: how might both types of institution benefit from a considerably closer, deeper, and more open relationship through which pedagogies and practices could be shared and developed?

Catherine Alexander, a senior lecturer at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD), is an advocate for RCSSD's seemingly unique training offer, placing the trainee in an environment "where the practical intensity of conservatoire training and the innovation and enquiry of a university meet" resulting in "a fluid combination of scholarship and research, industry-related vocational training and research-informed teaching" (RCSSD, 2013: [online]). Whilst RCSSD might be recognised as a notable pioneer of this academy-meets-industry fusion, Alexander also cited problems characteristic of this demanding form of training, the majority of which could be seen to align with the 'problems' of 'vocational' training. Issues for consideration raised by Alexander include: thinking about the 'actorly sheen' (are trained performers too polished?); training as a totalitarian regime; the hunt for an agent as a destructive trail; creating performers around what agents want; the apparent 'failure' of stepping outside the commercial box; and a question: does training crush mavericks? (*TCC*: University of Leeds, 30 October 2013). Alexander raised provocative questions to which there were no ready answers. This thesis contributes to the extension and development of this discussion.

The second component of the evening, entitled *Utopias*, aimed to allow the participants to offer "speculative futures that might be in dialogue with the opening section" of the

event (Pitches, *TCC*: University of Leeds, 30 October 2013). Tom Cornford (University of York) predicted that the role of the director will become extinct, suggesting that collaboration should be addressed in the performer training process (Cornford, *TCC*: University of Leeds, 30 October 2013). This proposition calls for further inquiry; an overwhelming proportion of the commercial industry continues to utilise an autocratic director. A wider dynamic in the *TCC* event pointed towards the possibility of decommercialising training. In the context of this research, Cornford's statement (and the notions discussed by the other presenters) might provide justification for affirmative action: if vocational training might, potentially, disappear in the future, now is the time for it to be fully explored and documented.

It would be possible to judge this portrayal of performer training as a bleak, staid, fading practice; a significant number of the views shared by the panelists appeared to chastise the ways in which vocational training institutions reputedly cater to the demands of the industry in a robotical and blinkered fashion. It is crucial, then, to emphasise the high regard in which vocational training continues to be held, the vast competition to win places at training institutions and, through this research, to present a critical account of a particular training environment, considering the successful, developing methods of the process. Equally important is the investigation into the ethical concept of responsibility and how this is working within the culture of training. We must explore the commitment of aspiring trainees who can never be fully certain that their training will pay off. It is vital to ensure young performers are aware of the choices they are making when embarking on training and the possible consequences of their decisions, but we must also seek to understand the strength and impact of a psychological *need* to train. Whilst self-reflexive, critically astute actors should be encouraged, the voices of 'intuitive' performers who might not excel in the academic world must not be ignored.

The questions posed by speakers at *TCC* pinpoint vocational training methods and ideologies as a cause for concern, drawing attention to the precarity of the performer's vocation. However, evidence can be found to suggest that being a triple threat offers performers the chance of employment. Within a taxing industry in which the competition for work is high, the triple threat becomes associated with terms such as 'value' and 'survival':

> "In order to survive in musical theater for any length of time, you're going to have to become what is known as a 'triple threat'. (Allen, 1999: p.11)

> "You need to be a triple threat. If you have a gap in your skills, it will keep you from being cast." (Deer and Dal Vera, 2008: p.378)
> "And now the bottom line is you have to be a triple threat. You have to be able to dance, act, and sing, and you've got to be unique. You have to have something about you that stands out, in a positive way." (Leborgne in Melton, 2013: p.23)

> "It is vital, for yourself and also for the industry that you are able to embrace all three disciplines, in order to survive. Presenting yourself as a triple threat provides you with more options and increases your chances of success because it affords the opportunity of getting work as an actor, singer or dancer or indeed any combination of the three!" (Tebbutt, 2003: p.6, emphasis in original)

> "Performers who can act, dance and sing are called a *triple threat* and usually are able to get more work than those who are skilled in only one area." (Sheppard, 2008: p.260)

> "If you happen to have acting, singing and dancing skills (what is called in theatre a 'triple threat'), you have a chance to actually make a living because performers who specialize in musical theatre have the greatest likelihood of finding employment." (Barton and McGregor, 2014: p.360)

These references provide firm evidence of the growing recognition of triple threat performers, nodding towards an understanding of the potential longevity of this career due to an ample skillset. In contemplating the survival of the triple threat, a number of matters are brought to light. First, the notion of discourse is crucial to consider in this inquiry: whose voices are being heard and where/when? How does discourse contribute towards the conceptualisation of the triple threat and our understanding of her training? These questions will be addressed in the final part of this chapter. Secondly, whilst ethics in musical theatre training are investigated in Chapter 4 and in the *Curated Interfaces*, the effects of the moral codes of the industry on the career of the triple threat should also be acknowledged. Questions concerning the power, control, influence and subjectivity of the casting director become apparent: a reminder of the inseparable links within the performer-training-industry loop.

Taylor (2013), Wolf (2011), Savran (2010, 2004) and Napier (2008) have challenged the stigmatisation of musical theatre in scholarly study and have forged a pathway for the genre to be better understood and valued, but as investigations into the triple threat performer have been limited, so is our understanding as to the cultural challenges faced

by these artists. An example of this lies in the notion that musical theatre performers struggle to be recognised as 'straight' actors. A problem that has long pervaded the industry, this binary separates those who are identified as musical theatre performers and those who are actors in plays. Whilst the citations above suggest that being a triple threat practitioner optimises chances of work and career longevity, mastering and maintaining an interdisciplinary skillset is neither easy nor does it guarantee a continuous stream of work.

Exploring the value of manuals in musical theatre training, Napier (2008) evidences this binary by highlighting a disparity in the lack of musical theatre books published when compared to acting guides. She supports her claim with the results of a search via the library catalogues of eight institutions[6], one of which is The Arts Educational Schools, London, and all of which are members of the Conference of Drama Schools. Using the terms 'Acting' and 'Musical Theatre' and selecting only manuals of instructions in the results, Napier discovered that acting manuals dominated significantly: "[c]haracteristically the results showed a ratio of one musical theatre manual to over seven acting manuals" (2008: ibid.). Developing further still Taylor's problematisation of musical theatre as 'just entertainment', cited in the Introduction to the this thesis, Napier details a binary which distinguishes between 'straight' theatre and musical theatre: "There is a readily-available distinction at the level of received wisdom, between the 'seriousness' of acting in 'straight' theatre and the frivolity and shallowness of musical theatre" (Napier, 2008: p. 285). She makes clear that, whilst this judgement does not necessarily carry any weight, it might be considered to contribute towards an explanation of this discrepancy or, alternatively, the absence of publications might quietly confirm the discrepancy (ibid: p.285). Furthermore, Napier suggests that the heterogeneity of musical theatre makes its technique difficult to define and, highlighting the many complexities of musical theatre as a craft, she pulls against the possibility of the form being identified as superficial (2008: p.285). I turn now to consider the impact of this binary on musical theatre training and trainees.

[6] The other institutions are: Guildford School of Acting; Guildhall School of Music and Drama; Scottish Academy of Music and Drama; Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA); Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance; Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama; and The [Royal] Central School of Speech and Drama (Napier, 2008: p.285).

Providing a rationale for his book *Acting Through Song* (2013)–a practical guide for 'musical-theatre actors'–Paul Harvard considers the stigma attached to musical theatre, offering insights which are directly related to the topic of this thesis. Harvard provides two reasons as to why musicals are so heavily criticised. The first reflects some people's dislike for the form or the writing and the second draws attention to those who "*think the acting isn't very good*" (Harvard, 2013: p.13, emphasis in original). Although he lists some prolific practitioners to make clear that some musical theatre performers are excellent actors, Harvard agrees that this criticism is justifiable and identifies training as the causal factor for this apparent lack of skill (2013):

> I think one reason that the acting suffers in musicals is that the need for multidimensional performers means singing and dancing tend to be prioritised in the training of musical theatre performers. Acting, no matter how much credence is given to it in drama-school prospectuses and mission statements[7], still seems to end up being the poor relation in the actuality of tuition. Rather than being explored in all its glorious detail, it is often introduced in a watered-down fashion – that is seen as being good enough for a musical. (p.14)

Discrimination against musical theatre performers has been debated in publications such as *The Stage* newspaper (Hemley, 2014) with a recent article focusing specifically on the musical theatre/'straight' binary (Elkin, 2017). Susan Elkin's account offers opinion on the relationship between the chosen training pathway of the performer and the employment trajectory that follows. Reflecting Harvard (2013), actor-musician, Sam Lupton, suggests that musical theatre students are deprived of a comprehensive acting curriculum (Lupton, 2017). Geoff Coleman (2017), Head of Acting at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama asserts:

> the distinction between acting and musical theatre courses is often wrongly marked out into different territories. Both involve telling a human inhabiting a story. In that sense, there is no difference and the training should have exactly the same rigour and acting content.

All contributors to the Elkin (2017) article agree that there is a stigma attached to musical theatre performers that frequently prevents them from accessing acting auditions. Coleman is not the only person to identify the significance of acting in musical theatre: further examples that promote the importance of one of the three disciplines at the expense of the other two – and this is very often acting – can be found. Focusing on

[7] Harvards's assertion validates my earlier point regarding how website content reflects (or does not reflect) the practice which it describes.

British musical theatre auditions, Stuart Moss and Ben Walmsley write: "Since the 1980s, this idea of the performer having the 'triple threat' has dominated, particularly in West End musical theatre. However, there are still many parts in British musicals where one skill, e.g. acting, is seen as being most important." (2014: p.146) Michael Allen, too, places emphasis on the importance of acting: "Performers in musical theater need to be able to dance, sing, and act. And the sooner they start their acting training the better because everything they ever do onstage will build on that ability" (1999). Allen, then, identifies acting as central to the musical theatre performer's practice and suggests that training will support the performer in their craft. And yet, Coleman (2017), Harvard (2013) and Lupton's (2017) claims point to a weighty issue in musical theatre training's approach to acting. Harvard remarks that musical theatre training presents acting in a limited capacity, suggesting that the results of this restricted approach are considered acceptable for the musical theatre into which training feeds (2013: p.14) In direct contrast to this is the goal of the triple threat training at ArtsEd, discussed earlier in this chapter: that is, to condense what would be learnt if one were to study a single discipline full-time, enabling three disciplines to be studied simultaneously. This raises questions about how disciplines cross over each other: can acting be considered as a discipline that cuts across the disciplinary boundaries of singing and dancing? If so, how does this work in practice? The case study findings presented in Chapter 3 address these questions. The separation of the triple threat's skillset in training is the focus of the next section.

Separation: one genre, three (or more) disciplines

Examining disciplinary boundaries is important when thinking about musical theatre training because it calls attention to pedagogical approaches and how these methods deal with the challenge of synthesising the three contrasting disciplines of acting, singing and dancing. Here I draw on musical theatre literature to evidence how the separation of disciplines has been problematised, and to identify a need for a much closer examination as to how the trainer-trainee relationship works in practice. Finally, I highlight a(nother) hierarchy which places one discipline above the other two, indicating how this ranking is addressed within my case study.

In considering the triple threat performer and how she might integrate her skills, Michael Ellison problematises the understanding that musical theatre is made up of three distinct, separate disciplines (Ellison, 1994):

> A separate-but-equal model establishes an isolation of parts which diminishes the ability of the parts to learn from each other. Viewing diverse elements as wedges of a circle or branches of a tree creates a similar limitation. The danger here is compartmentalization. A mindset which encourages people to think of themselves as dancers, singers, or actors, as if those worlds were mutually exclusive, also encourages a performer to "accumulate various skills" rather than incorporating them in a larger frame. (p.217, emphasis in original)

LeBorgne also voices a need for clear disciplinary integration in training (LeBorgne in Melton, 2013):

> So often in our training we compartmentalize. We go to acting class and we do scene study and we take everything apart and it is often left to the student to integrate that knowledge and put it all together. Then we go to our singing lesson, and we just work on breathing for thirty minutes. Then we go to our dance lesson and we're not allowed to let our abs out. I think you have to take the best of everything, integrate it, and then just do it. (p.23)

This disciplinary separation is also described by Deer and Dal Vera in their manual, *Acting in Musical Theatre: A Comprehensive Course* (2008):

> Training for this exciting and challenging field has traditionally been piecemeal, leading students to study singing, dance and acting independently with the hope they will somehow figure out how to put them all together when the time comes. Even those training programs that do attempt to pull the various strands together rarely do so with a technique students can reliably access on their own. (pp.xxvii-xxviii)

Deer and Dal Vera go on to state the necessity of a "clearly articulated method" (2008: p.xxviii) for approaching musical theatre acting, claiming their text as the first to address and provide this system. Highlighting a gap in which musical theatre students have to rely on their teachers to direct them in forming an integrated performance, Deer and Dal Vera suggest that staff members "[use] their personal experience and instinct to select useful choices *for* the actor" (ibid, italics in original). Positioned vis-à-vis the creative agency of the performer, this concern resonates with the issues articulated by those working in academic institutions contemplated in the previous section. Deer and Dal Vera name the person guiding the student as the "teacher" (ibid): however, it is necessary to differentiate between the various types of practitioner with whom the trainee works as part of her training. The ArtsEd third year musical theatre students, for example, spend a considerable amount of the year working on productions for public performance. This involves working with a professional production team (as opposed to those who might identify themselves as teachers) who are employed as a result of their successful work in

the industry: using their experience, then, is a key objective of the production team's work and allows trainees and team to practice and play out relationships with industry 'creatives'.[8] Deer and Dal Vera's assertion that teachers made decisions on behalf of the performer raises important questions about training aims, pedagogies, agency and creativity, and I reflect on this concisely below. Examining training in context enables a more nuanced account of training practices: through my case study at ArtsEd I am able to build on Deer and Dal Vera's proposition.

Surmising that the performers-in-training are not in control of their own choices is, I suggest, a generalisation. This is not to say that both teachers and 'creatives' cannot be found making and communicating choices to the student during classes and the production process, but that these choices often require collaboration in the form of discussion, rehearsal and 'working in' ideas. Neither do I dispute Deer and Dal Vera's declaration that students are expected to take on choices made by their teachers in their day-to-day training. Indeed, at times these decisions are directed to the student who is then left to process the instruction with little aid. Surely, in doing so, the performer is thinking, making choices and filling a gap that will then be demonstrated in their creative response. An apposite notion also lies in noting that there is a need for training to reflect the industry into which it feeds. Currently, in the musical theatre business, there is a requisite for performers to be critical thinkers who are able to make choices about their performances, but are also capable of adapting and responding to direction from directors, musical directors and choreographers (frequently within a narrow window of time).

Furthermore, Deer and Dal Vera state that, in sharing their own skill and understanding, the "teacher's hope is that this experience will ultimately accumulate and add up to a technique the student actor can take into a career" (2008: p.xxviii). The assumption that students will pick up skills and important aspects about the profession from their tutors through a form of osmosis is problematic. Whilst there may be a long history of this mode of learning, there is much about how this works (or does not work) in practice that

[8] An industry term used to describe the director, musical director, choreographer, and designers of a production, 'creatives' (also referred to as the 'creative team') is a problematic description. The term is explored in Chapter 3; it functions here to remind that the terminology of (musical) theatre needs to be questioned.

is unclear and merits scrutiny. Through an investigation of the process of this teacher/professional–student knowledge exchange and the unique relationships within the training setting, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of how relationships in training work as an essential feature in and beyond the training process. If Deer and Dal Vera's desire for the actor to be "a full partner in the creative process" (ibid) involves the performer critically thinking and equally contributing their opinions as collaborator within the process, it is likely that pedagogical shifts will need to occur in training. Napier highlights that although at the outset Deer and Dal Vera comment on the lack of disciplinary crossovers in musical theatre training, their book deals only with acting and singing in musical theatre, confining the dance component to a brief mention (Napier, 2008: p.287). In doing so, Deer and Dal Vera undermine their claim, made at the beginning of the publication, of producing the "first book to combine these [musical theatre] disciplines into a comprehensive guide" (2008: front pages): a claim which Napier deems "too large to be comprehended in a single volume" (2008: p.287). I turn now to discuss how various discourses around the triple threat can be recognised to help or hinder the triple threat performer and training.

Shifting discourses

In the final section of this chapter, I scrutinise the discourses that surround the triple threat (performer and training). The different kinds of discourse being deployed and how they circulate are important. Only by probing these interpretations and thinking about the ways in which they contribute towards the definition and operation of the term triple threat, can a deeper, clearer comprehension of the concept be achieved.

A diverse range of sources has been used in this chapter to shape a picture of the triple threat performer: publications from the fields of musical theatre, dance and film; personal experience; conference proceedings; websites; interviews; and newspaper articles. It is clear that the different types of discourse that surround the triple threat are significant in shaping current perceptions of this breed of performer and their training. The diagram below encapsulates the various discourses.[9] I am not suggesting that the discourses which are included in this diagram are the *only* discourses in operation around

[9] These discourses are further unpacked throughout the thesis.

the triple threat, but that these represent those which are pertinent to the topic of this chapter and dominant within this research. Whilst in each discursive context a differing definition of the triple threat performer and musical theatre training is constructed, the image illustrates a way in which to think about the (range of) cultures in which these dialogues are operating and how these might interrelate.

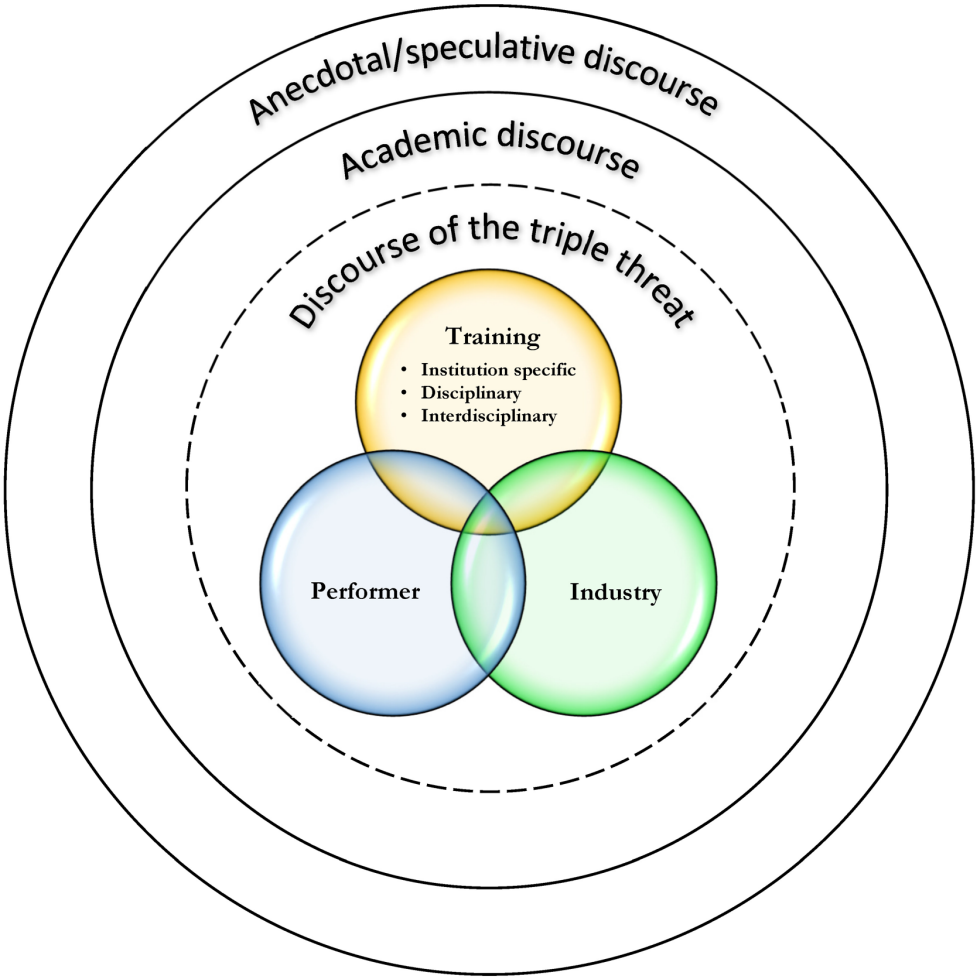


Figure 1: Discourses around the triple threat

The configuration, size and outlines of the circles represent an awareness of points of access (to these discourses), shared and shifting discourses, and expert/non-expert dialogues:

- *Anecdotal/ speculative discourse* groups the broad generalisations that are propagated within non-expert cultures along with articles such as those

published in industry newspaper *The Stage*. Articles in *The Stage* problematise the triple threat performer (Elkin, 2017; Hemley, 2014) and performers frequently speak of the challenges that come with being labelled as a triple threat. Whilst sources such as these are valuable as they contribute towards a public and professional discourse respectively, their capacity is limited as these ideas are being circulated uncritically;

- *Academic discourse* refers to the verbal and written modes of communication circulated within scholarly settings. Recurrent mentions of the 'triple threat' in musical theatre publications indicate that the term has become recognised and accepted within the field of performance, with Symonds and Taylor describing it as "the dominant conception of what a 'fully trained' performer in music theater might be" (2013: p.209). However, as corroborated in the content of this chapter so far, whilst a number of scholars nod to the triple threat in their work, seldom few engage in a critical analysis of the notion. Exceptions to this can be found in the work of Dominic Symonds (2014) and Michael Ellison (1994);

- The broken line between the *Academic discourse* and *Discourse of the triple threat* portions symbolises the emerging relationship between the academic and vocational fields and the possibility of the development of a common discourse that could benefit both types of institution. The *Discourse of the triple threat* sphere contains three circles that intersect; one round represents the *Performer*, one *Training*, and one *Industry*. It is relevant that the inner three circles are enclosed: this signals the challenges in accessing these specialised realms.[10]

Within the training environment of the triple threat, I suggest that three key discourses are at play: institution-specific discourse; disciplinary discourse; and interdisciplinary discourse. **Institution-specific Discourse**, in this analysis, groups the language that is particular to ArtsEd, specifically the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course. It is my understanding that regularly used terms that may, to the outsider, appear demotic, play a

[10] The ways in which issues of access have impacted this research are discussed in detail in the Introduction.

critical role in shaping the unique culture of the triple threat training. Also in this category is the idiosyncratic language of both staff and students; the characterisation of certain behaviour as an ArtsEd training peculiarity (referred to as such verbally by staff and students); and explicit references to the geographical placement of the school.[11]
Disciplinary Discourse includes distinct terms that are used only within their respective disciplines (be this acting, singing or dancing): these are mostly technical terms.
Interdisciplinary Discourse identifies common language that is used across the three disciplines. Whilst some of this discourse is included within the curriculum indicating a shared vocabulary and a sense of continuity and cohesion across the course, a considerable amount of this has gone undocumented. The analysis of the original data that belongs within this category is particularly significant in supporting the development of key insights into the workings of the triple threat training ideology at ArtsEd.

In probing deeper into the concept of discourse to consider its significance within musical theatre training, two matters arise that I identify as key in further understanding the triple threat performer and her training. The first concerns the need to clarify the framing of the term 'discourse' within this inquiry. A simple definition of discourse states: "to speak or write on a particular topic" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020), and this, indeed, accounts for the content of the chapter to this point and for a portion of the material collected for the purpose of this research. However, in the context of this work, confining 'discourse' to mean solely that which has been written or uttered would be acutely limiting. Gee's theory of 'D/discourse' enables a crucial aspect of this inquiry to be realised. Defining 'little d discourse' as "language-in-use" used " 'on-site' to enact activities and identities" (Gee, 2005: p.7), Gee asserts that these social practices are seldom performed through language alone (ibid, 2005):

> To 'pull off' being an 'X' doing 'Y' [— an ArtsEd student undertaking musical theatre training to become a triple threat performer —] it is not enough to get just the words *or moves* right, though that is crucial. It is also necessary to get one's body, clothes, gestures, actions, interactions, symbols, tools, technologies (…), values, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions 'right', as well, and at the 'right' places and times. (p.7, italics added)

By applying Gee's inclusive theory to the musical theatre trainee the contextual breadth that I understand to be imperative in further researching the triple threat and her training

[11] The relevance of the location of ArtsEd is explored in *Curated Interface (1)*.

is afforded. As discussed in the Introduction to this work, it is paramount that the corporeal, empirical and sensorial elements of training are embraced in this inquiry. In thinking, then, about **D**iscourse and musical theatre training in relation to Gee's assertion, I draw attention to the significance of Gee's use of the term "right": this raises questions about the ideology of training, training aims, and ethical matters. Who dictates what and whom is 'right' in triple threat training? How do students learn to be the 'right' kind of performer and how is this manifested in training? Who is satiated by this 'rightness'? The performer? The pedagogue? The industry? Future audiences? These questions are considered in subsequent chapters. Laura Alba Juez's clear assertion about defining the work of discourse analysts can be fruitfully applied to musical theatre: "Even when a discipline is hard to delimit, (…) we can learn a great deal about its field of concern by observing what practitioners do" (2009: p.16). To investigate the D/discourses of triple threat training is to recognise the unique combination of sociocultural particularities which contribute to the formation of the ArsEd training culture as an integral aspect of the performer's training process.

Triple threat training and (inter)disciplinarity

The second topic concerns the triple threat and the concept of interdisciplinarity. Earlier in this chapter, the notion of separation (between disciplines) is introduced and, in the previous section, I use Figure 1 to suggest that the discourse that features in the training environment might be framed to reflect the way in which it cuts across or remains within disciplinary boundaries. Following on from this, it is necessary to further examine the pairing of the triple threat and interdisciplinarity. In doing so, I draw on Symonds' provocation (2014) in which the conception of the triple threat is reappraised.

Using a metaphorical cube to consider musical theatre, Symonds reminds that "we like to put things in boxes: to organize our thoughts and our understanding of the world in tidy and manageable ways" (2014: p.3), pointing out that this process of organisation may have a detrimental effect as, in doing so, certain aspects can be overlooked. Symonds describes the common emphasis placed on boxing trilogies within the 'classic' model of musical theatre: the performer who is considered to be an actor and a singer and a dancer, and the writing team (composer, librettist, and lyricist) (2014: p.3). Surprisingly, the trio that is the director, musical director and choreographer is omitted from Symonds' examples. He challenges what he describes as "our casual understanding of

musical theatre performance practice" (2014: p.4): that is, a performing body in which three skills are (effortlessly and harmoniously) amalgamated. Conversely, Symonds suggests that the way in which the activities are talked about ensures that each exists quite separately from the other (ibid). Elaborating on this, he asserts that this is

> a result of the way we have constructed a concept of different disciplines operating within this composite discipline of music theatre. … Many of the assumptions we make about this form perpetuate or consolidate this idea: ours is a collaborative form (we make that assumption almost without thinking); it is interdisciplinary, integrated, hybrid. Yet is it? (2014: pp.4-5)

Symonds questions the assumption that musical theatre is interdisciplinary by nature. This statement is supported with examples of the way in which disciplines are constantly reinforced as "conceptually distinct" via our discrete engagement with them (2014: p.5); we utilise discipline-specific language, documentation, and carve out definitive roles, all of which emphasise and reaffirm "the rule of three" (ibid). Whilst Symonds evidences the training of triple threat performers as a specimen of this division, I believe that this notion of separation requires further consideration.

In considering the effect of labelling the form of musical theatre as "collaborative, interdisciplinary and hybrid" (2014: p.5) Symonds makes a claim that, by acknowledging it as such, we must also (inherently) recognise the presence of skills additional to those that we traditionally associate with the triple threat performer (ibid). Pulling against an understanding of this practitioner as one that can be confined to a set of skills-based boxes but continuing to utilise the rule of three, he suggests that

> the triple threat is less defined by the adjacent skills of discipline (acting, singing, dancing) but more by stratified layers (development, promotion, collaboration) or dynamics (aurality, physicality, vocality), elements that *cut across* the conventional boxes into which we organize our thinking and practice about this form. (2014: p.5, italics in original)

It is here that vocational training is referenced, reminding that whilst musical theatre students master a practice through which their acting, singing and dancing skills are refined, this aspect only accounts for some of the wide-ranging expertise that must be learned in order for a theatrical career to be maintained (Symonds, 2014: p.5). Although this mention of training is brief, it is important. Symonds goes on to draw on music theatre literature to develop this thinking about the structure of musical theatre and

stratification.[12] A further example as to how certain kinds of language shape and 'box' a particular conceptualisation of musical theatre — in this instance, the way in which the term 'song-form' creates an image of the musical as "something that is 'modular'" (Symonds, 2014, p.8) — is particularly useful in drawing attention to what is missed out through this naming. Symonds lists some of these 'absent' dynamics, integral to the form: "music, narrative, physicality, relationships and effect, and *particularly* collaboration, integration and immersion". Questions and concepts that surfaced from deep in the (triple threat) field during my research at ArtsEd and the case study findings[13] shed further light on Symonds' innovative thinking and move this theory forward, progressing the idea of (inter)disciplinarity within musical theatre training.

Symonds writes of the conflict that exists when the three musical theatre disciplines meet, brought into effect by "their different demands on the performing body" (2014: p.4) and, indeed, ArtsEd does not escape this challenge. The differing physiological demands of each discipline (and the challenges of combining them) have been discussed (Symonds, 2014; Lightfoot and Morton, 2014; Melton, 2007) and, in recent years, the need for training to be shaped to deal with the demands on the 'musical theatre body' has been stressed (Palmer, 2014). What I am interested in here is the way in which the "incompatibilities" (2014: p.4) that Symonds writes of are presented in training and how ArtsEd approaches these issues. What happens when the disciplines of musical theatre clash? Can these tensions ever be productive? Symonds refers only to physical incompatibilities, but I argue that disciplinary harmony and discord is bound up with people and pedagogies, too. In order to address these questions, the broader context in which the disciplines of musical theatre operate must be taken into account.

The case study of the ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre training experience confirms that disciplinary conflict can be the result of psychological, personal or micropolitical differences: in training, the disciplines are always bound up with human identities and relationships. How problematic, then, are clashing ideologies within the training zone? Ellison warns: "Warring factions are antagonistic at the very least. When acting, singing and dancing are viewed as competing with each other, integration is impossible" (1994: p.217). However, studies into interdisciplinarity acknowledge that the concept can only

[13] In-depth analyses of these findings are situated in the chapters which follow.

come about when there are clear disciplinary barriers to be crossed. If these clashes can be linked directly to disciplinary differences and if interdisciplinarity is, indeed, a desirable feature in the development of training, contrasting perspectives can be seen as a necessity.

Alongside an exploration of the way in which the tensions between disciplines shape the pedagogy at ArtsEd is the study of evidence supporting the idea that interdisciplinary elements are already functioning in triple threat training. How might an understanding of these interdisciplinary links aid and support the performer-in-training and the teaching staff? How can pedagogical methods be developed to ensure that these connections are embedded in the evolving curriculum? Is it possible to develop an overarching, interdisciplinary vocabulary to decodify the "different languages" that, in Symonds view, currently fractionate the form of musical theatre (2014: p.5), instead supporting the creation of a united interdiscipline? The success and acclaim of ArtsEd's triple threat training, some of which is reflected in the high level of graduate employment within West End and Broadway musicals, national and international musical tours and original musical theatre productions produced in regional theatres, and is reinforced by aspiring trainees, current and past students and industry alike. The analysis of the ArtsEd musical theatre training experience uncovers significant findings revealing how the school is actively developing its approaches to diversify and innovate this highly-specific training practice.

In this chapter I have explored the term 'triple threat' and its usage within the genre of musical theatre, ascertaining that the expression can be employed to describe either a multiskilled performer or a form of vocational training. Whether referring to person or process, the definitions that have been in use to date are problematic. Looking to training it is clear that, even within specialist training programmes, divergent interpretations of the concept of the triple threat exist and these understandings heavily influence each institution's practice. In thinking about the triple threat practitioner, two primary interpretations surface: one which hierachises and separates the disciplines of acting, singing and dancing, another which sees these skills being magically amalgamated. The last-mentioned definition may be reflective of the experience of the masses viewing a musical theatre performance, but it does little to convey the complexities of the genre.

The way in which the triple threat and her practice are discursively constructed has had a strong impact on our understanding of the concept.

This chapter demonstrates that the identity of the triple threat and her training has been subject to paradoxical qualities: she is seen as a practitioner whose chances of employment are optimised due to being multiskilled but also as the performer who is confined to working in one performance genre, musical theatre; as the graduate of vocational training who can 'do' (physicalise/mimic) but not 'think' (intellectualise/articulate); as the practitioner who can do everything and, consequentially, cannot do any *thing* (here, I am referring to the disciplines of musical theatre in their singular forms). Being trebly skilled does not necessarily allow practitioners to move between pure disciplinary forms, and preconceptions about musical theatre training and performers emanating from those within the industry mark training and affect performers' career trajectories. Paradoxical, too, is the description that reiterates the triple threat as a singer or a dancer or an actor when this is juxtaposed with a portrayal which emphasises the totality of a neatly integrated practice. Generalisations, simplification and contradictions appear to have stunted the development of a profound understanding of the triple threat. Focusing on the ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course to further interrogate, contextualise and theorise the triple threat and her training provides the opportunity to better understand how this performer and, indeed, the world she inhabits is culturally constructed.

CURATED INTERFACE (1) | *Practising place as a mnemonic*

> We map our experiences–moving landscapes traced with aesthetic and sensory hues, ruptures of memory, and overlays of imagination.
> (Daspit and McDermott, 2002: p.179)

This is an interface in which ArtsEd as place is used as mnemonic: it situates training and the self in the here-now through memories of the there-then. Processes of walking, archiving, embodiment, transformation, forgetting, and documenting are investigated and presented to begin to construct a record of training remembered.

I have long been aware of the significance with which I imbue Chiswick and of the consequential impact of my ArtsEd training on the way in which I define myself. Here, alongside nine co-researchers–also graduates of the ArtsEd Musical Theatre Course–I situate myself in relation to my training. In these interfaces, the extent to which training and how training might be understood to affect and shape the performer's sense of self is examined: attending to memory as a point of reference for the researchers to (re)engage with their training. Recognising not only the ArtsEd building but, also, Chiswick, as "a custodian and agent of memory" (Mock, 2009: p.21), we reflect on the experience–together and as indiviuals–of revisiting a particular site. Recreating journeys, reencountering space, and reperforming events through narrative and action to (re)consider the embodied memories triggered by our practice: reenactment is used "as a form of affective history" (Agnew, 2007: p.301).

In Chapter 2 I seek to explain the cocoon-like form of the ArtsEd building and how it functions to shape training. Here I will "show" and "tell" (Ellis and Bochner, 2016; Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011) that training transcends the training building, too: the location of the school, within the district of Chiswick, affects and is affected by ArtsEd students and graduates. What does it mean to return to the training site years after the event of training? How do we (re)engage with place, space and our former and present selves through practice?

Please listen to Audio Track 1 now:
Third year vocal warm up, BA (Hons) Musical Theatre students, ArtsEd, 2015.

DEAR OLD [C]HIZ

The ArtsEd building, situated on Bath Road, is a short distance from Turnham Green Tube Station and is rooted in the character of the leafy, affluent suburb of Chiswick, within the metropolis. To me, it is both London and not London. It has a W4 postcode and belongs to the London Borough of Hounslow, but its close proximity to the M4 (allowing easy access to my hometown in the West Country) and its greenness challenge any claustrophobia that might come with stereotypical perceptions about capital city habitation. The rattle of the Underground which, ironically, crosses overground above Turnham Green Terrace and the regular, heavy sighs of red London buses, however, cements its urban identity. To remember my training at ArtsEd is to remember Chiswick.

Reminiscing with my parents about their visits, we think fondly of Bollo Lane, Thornton Avenue, Fishers Lane and Devonshire Road. We smile as we speak of an acquaintance, the shop worker at Best One newsagents on the Terrace, to whom I waved each time I passed and who would kiss my hand whenever I entered: "My future! Light of my life, my future wife!"; of the friendly manager of Quantus who once plied us with complimentary watermelon martinis; and of our familiar, familial breakfast haunt, Maison Blanc, where the delectably indulgent croissants aux amandes et chocolat sold out at such speed. To remember Chiswick is to remember my training at ArtsEd.

BOLLO LANE

Hannah B. and I meet through the Stagetalk chatroom on The Stage website, bonding over our love of Les Miserables reflected in our usernames: Cosette and Eponine. We chat on the phone and, following a phonecall with Viv in the ArtsEd Musical Theatre Office, her and I, along with Ellie and Emily start looking for a property to rent. Contracts signed, guarantors in place, rent account opened: the first floor flat at 8 Bollo Lane becomes our first year home.

In order to take all the belongings I need to London, my parents both drive a car to Chiswick, chock-full of my belongings. We travel to London on Sunday, the day before I am due to start at ArtsEd. Overwhelmed with emotion, my Mum cries from Portishead to Reading. A few weeks earlier, I have driven to London with my boyfriend, Dave, to show him the flat and, in a preparatory bid to make it a little more homely, I take my patterned orange and yellow bedding to make the double bed. Arriving with my Mum and Dad, I ring the doorbell and we wait… Clad in a towel and hair turban, a hungover Ellie opens the door. It is the first time we have met. We make our way up the stairs, along the landing and up the another flight of stairs to the attic room which will be mine. Hannah B. surfaces apologetically from underneath my duvet as I enter, explaining that she has been sleeping in my bed whilst she waits for her new bed to arrive. I attempt to disguise my dismay that she

has not asked before not only sleeping in my bed but, apparently by the huge pile of clothes on the floor beside it, temporarily moving into my bedroom.

A TASK

1. ***(a) Begin outside a residence at which you lived whilst you were an ArtsEd student. (If possible, this should be where you lived in your first year.) As you approach the house or flat:***
   - ***Note the thoughts that come to mind: memories, feelings, words, what you notice about the building, whether or not anything has changed, etc.***
   - ***Describe how you used to feel leaving the house in the morning and returning in the evening.***

   (b) Start your journey to ArtsEd, taking the same route you took as a student:
   - ***Become aware of the thoughts and feelings that come to mind and body as you walk. How does it feel to return to this journey? […]***

JOURNEY(IN): A POETIC ITERATION OF A MEMORY WALK

(Becky, Emily, Joff, Lucy, Michelle, Tom, Janine)

It feels like a little world in itself, this.
Leaving in the morning to go to college -
excited, nervous, not good enough, proud…
An outsider.
I used to walk alone to college a lot -
I don't know what that means.

New experiences
learning
accents
making friendships for life
grief
flat-sharing
mini discs
sorting bills
a difficult landlord
parties
singing
a broken oven
drugs
relief
stresses

relationships
exhaustion
death
drinking
excitement
teachers
complaining neighbours
the bag lady of Chiswick.

Most mornings feeling dread,
anxiety, delight, disbelief, anticipation…
You're gonna get found out.
It's another day…
shit! It's another day
where I'm gonna get told
I'm not very good.
So you hope that it's gonna
be a good day so then
the next day'll be good and then…
You just do it though.
It's normal.
Do you know what I mean?

The buzz of the building
it pulls energy
pulls you and pushes you…

Please listen to Audio Track 2 now:
***Familiar Faces*, Hannah Bingham/Nick Hutson, 2011. Recording ©Nick Hutson. Used with permission of the composer.**

FIRST DAY (1)

I walk down Chiswick High Road with Hannah B. Bohemian and slight, a chiffon skirt layered over her blue denim jeans, her floaty ethereality is offset and grounded by a fervent passion for musical theatre. Her excitability, understood by me as enthusiasm and first day nerves, is not yet recognisable as mania. I am her "love", "pet" and "chick". I watch myself from above, overwhelmed by my new identity as I perform what is (almost) to become my commute. (This is not the most direct route to ArtsEd from our flat, but Hannah B. has suggested that we pick up a Starbucks coffee en route to college.) I feel present and content. Although I know it not to be true, it is almost as if what comes next is unimportant: so great is this sense of fulfillment.

FIRST DAY (2): Monday 6th October 2014

The Eastbound District line train clatters towards Turnham Green: the line of majestic red-brick Bedford Park houses comes into view and I crane my neck to look down at the pedestrian path that cuts through Acton Green. I realise that, prior to this point, on my journey from Northfields to Chiswick, I have been lulled into a relaxed but ready state that might be likened to Anne Bogart and Tina Landau's "soft focus" approach: "the physical state in which we allow the eyes to soften and relax so that, rather than looking at one or two things in sharp focus, they can now take in many" (2005, p.30). Stepping off the train at Turnham Green, I note the features of the train and station platform that mark these areas as what Augé (1995) has called "non-places" are, paradoxically, the very characteristics that I recognise in the act of situating myself as I move through London. I breathe in Chiswick: the bottle green railings; the familiar face of the tube station employee; passing Wheelers Flowers stall, the dry cleaners, the old fashioned chemist shop on the bend and I am on Bath Road. I see Trinitys Café, the tiny newsagents, the Tabard Pub and Theatre and across Flanders Road. Approaching the school, my heartbeat quickens and ritual kicks in as I take a diagonal step onto the paving stones guiding my track around the side of the ArtsEd building to the entrance.

PERFORMING (IN) THE CITY: Research diary entry, 27th October 2014

To undertake auto/ethnographic fieldwork is to be immersed in an intensive process. I sometimes take the opportunity to leave the ArtsEd building and go for a walk around Chiswick during my lunchbreak. In doing so, I feel that I am relieving both myself and the staff who spend time in the staffroom and, similarly, the staff and students who take their lunch in the canteen. However, this choice is not straightforward: the reflexive nature of ethnographic practice makes complex seemingly simple decisions such as where and with whom I eat my

lunch. In arguing that the context in which training occurs is a vital component influencing the training experience, that which is observed 'between' formal classes is of equal importance to that which is documented within them. Should I eat lunch with the musical theatre students at lunchtime? Or should I sit in the staffroom? Do I ask if I can attend the executive meetings timetabled to take place over Thursday lunchtimes or would my presence be intrusive, affecting discussions regarding confidential matters? Should I leave the building at all during the working day or might this cause me to miss important exchanges of information? Here I reflect the dilemma described by McAuley (2012: p.12-13) as she contemplates the practical and ethical implications of her own consequential decisions as an observer of the rehearsal process.

LUNCHTIME WALK: 6th November 2014

It has not taken long to realise that to define my lunchtime walk as respite is inaccurate. Stepping outside the ArtsEd building, I am unable to 'switch off'. Hocking's words are recontextualised and reimagined: "Switch on, Janine!" At first, I am adrenalized with information: my analytic brain desperate to keen to replay and make sense of the morning's events. And yet, still in observation mode, my eyes and ears remain alert to the activity in the street, hyperaware of the city that moves around me. My track is both spontaneous and well-rehearsed, the premiere and revival of an embodied and out of body walking performance.

I search for faces. As a student at ArtsEd, it would be rare to walk down Bath Road, the Terrace or the High Road without passing a familiar face. *Aaron. Briony. Conleth. Kelly.* But I am not only looking for people that I know: I am yet to meet many of the students I am to observe. What does an ArtsEd musical theatre student look like? I am somewhat horrified as I recall the words of our formidable first year Jazz Tutor and Head of First Year: "ArtsEd don't take uglies." It is not only a face that makes an ArtsEd musical theatre student recognisable: a person sporting dancewear both stands out and fits in on Chiswick's pavements, as does the twanging voice riffing musical theatre tunes.

A TASK

2. ***Take me on a tour of the ArtsEd building. Tell me about it. […]***

WRITING THE SITE: POINTS OF INTEREST

THE FOYER:

Please listen to Audio Track 3 now:
ArtsEd foyer, 2014.

The ArtsEd foyer is giddy with young people. Ahead of me in the queue to get into the ArtsEd reception for registration stands Bea. She wears a pale yellow jumper, braces track her teeth, and she is the spitting image of a young Barbara Streisand. She has a quiet, appealing astuteness and has just turned eighteen.

"I've been into this building many times and I've seen it change over the years, each year. The building feels like it's been sanitised and it's more corporate. It feels more contemporary and maybe more connected to what the industry is now…but it feels different. I remember the messy student bar and people smoking in. I remember it being closer to what I remember the film of *Fame* being. This world feels more like what I'd imagine the new *Fame* being. […] Everything feels like it's had money pumped into it…which is good." (Tom)

Figure 2: ArtsEd Foyer (n.d.). Photo ©Overbury.

"There's something about this building…" (Michelle)

"What I love about this building is…it always has an energy…" (Tom)

"Coming into the foyer, I remember thinking: 'All these girls are stunning. Everyone's so pretty.'" (Emily)

"I remember how beautiful everyone was and studying their faces, thinking: 'Some of these people will become my best friends in life' and 'we are the stars of the future'. To say I was a big dreamer is an understatement." (Conleth)

Figure 3: ArtsEd Foyer (n.d.). Photographer unknown.

STUDIO 1:

"Memories of being told to go outside the room, turn around three times, spit over my shoulder, swear and then to knock and wait for permission to re-enter." (Emily)

"It's really weird with it being…white. It used to be black and the cupboard was *there*…you've heard the story about the girl she locked in a cupboard?" (Joff)

Fifty-two first year students sit on the wooden floor in Studio 1 for the first Performance class, tired bodies coaxed to fit into one half of the room, the remaining space: a stage for those performing. Hannah B. presents a captivating rendition of If I Loved You. Eyes sparkling, her beautifully clear vocal tone and pretty vibrato is matched by the terrific clarity of her character's thought process. She seems to lose and find herself in the music.

"I just think it's so interesting - this room, white. I kinda hate it because I think it's great to have a black space. I also think black's really, really conducive to doing theatre…there's something really great about working in a black room, black box. […] It just looks really different and there was a cupboard there…Ursula's cupboard's been filled up... I remember a story about a girl in the year above us being locked in the cupboard…" (Tom)

STUDIO 201:

"201. This is, like, the main room, I think, in my time here, 'cos you did your first year Jazz there, your second year Jazz there, we did some ballet, we did *pas de deux*, song and dance… quite a lot happened in this room. I remember doing Jazz […] and doing *jetes* from the corner and if your *jetes* weren't very good you'd just have to just continue out into the corridor…" (Michelle)

"It's weird looking in mirrors. I don't quite recognise *that* person in the mirror…and that's weird. I'm not being narcissistic or anything, I'm just saying it's odd. A room with so much energy being thrown around, so many people…it's weird that it's an empty room. So much has happened in this room…there's a lot of memories." (Tom)

STUDIO 21:

"201 was like (exhalation of breath) *the* Jazz room. (…) I have mixed emotions about this room… … it was dance-based and dance used to stress me out quite a bit. It hasn't changed much." (Lucy)

Figure 4: ArtsEd (2015). PaR Workshop, Michelle's Jazz shoes.

I used to love that room and I used to love…we had Jill for Ballet? In there? In second year…and you'd be at the barre and the sun would come be coming through the windows and Jill would just say:"It's the spotlight, darlin', it's the spotlight…" (Joff)

"That room just scares me. 21. That room's got a cloud hanging over it." (Becky)

"I didn't feel very secure in that room. However, I've got good memories of rehearsing one of my favourite projects in there…" (Emily)

THE LIBRARY:

"Oh my god, I've just remembered John, I haven't thought about… oh god, yeah. That *(points towards library building)* was John, who used to be in charge of the library." (Michelle)

"It's just a great resource, that library…I just wish I'd used it more. I have to buy so many plays now… I just wish I'd read every single play in that library. Why? Why?! *(laughs)* We didn't have time, did we?!" (Tom)

THE CANTEEN:

"Memories of flapjacks…and I used to eat the same thing every day – I used to make myself cous cous with spinach and a tin of mackerel, and that's all I ever ate." (Michelle)

We break during our Chorus Line rehearsal and I pick up my phone and slip outside studio 21. There is a voicemail from my agent, requesting that I call back. I do so, walking down the corridor and into the empty canteen. The next few moments are life-changing. Recalling the event, the specificity of the words exchanged eludes me, but the feelings experienced resurface suddenly, violently, viscerally. I leave the canteen with the offer of the role of Liza in the national tour of Seven Brides for Seven Brothers and quietly return to my rehearsal.

"I used to have the same thing for lunch every day…I liked the routine of that." (Joff)

"That [the canteen] just haunts me… I don't really want to go in." (Becky)

THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE:

"This hasn't changed. These stairs were always freezing – they are right now!" (Lucy)

"I remember running down here in my ballet leotard and tights, rushing to get from Jazz class to Ballet." (Emily)

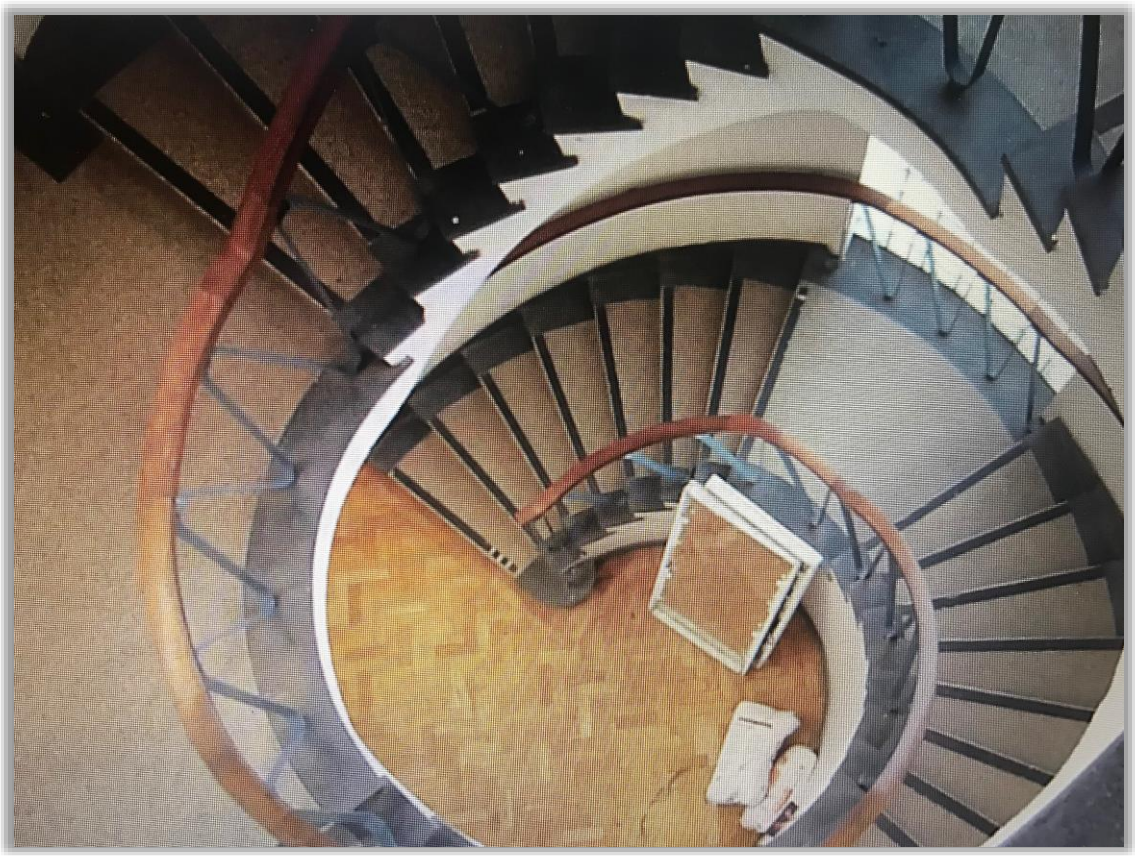


Figure 5: ArtsEd (2015). Spiral staircase.

"…lots of people on the spiral staircase…" (Michelle)

THE CORRIDORS:

"This is *our* corridor, that we'd walk in every morning. It would always be really busy." (Michelle)

"The temperature completely changes in this place. It's just so cold." (Tom)

(Entering the 'musical theatre corridor') "Oh god! Eww, I do feel weird, actually." (Lucy)

"There's part of me that feels a bit… it makes me feel a bit sick being in this corridor. Jazz always used to be in there and it's where we used to do our performance classes." (Joff)

"This (*gestures up and down corridor*) is all acting…" (Michelle)

"This was the acting corridor…" (Emily)

"I remember following teachers up the stairs... *(long pause)* wanting to be liked." (Tom)

Figure 6: ArtsEd (2008). Hannah and Janine sitting outside Studio 23. Source: Personal archive. Photographer unknown.

"We know this corridor very well… I remember people running down here doing jazz leaps, like *Fame*." (Michelle)

"Running from one class to another and you couldn't be late." (Lucy)

"We'd always have about a minute to get from one class to the next…" (Joff)

A TASK

3. Thinking about your training, find a way to respond physically to the following words:

Discipline

"When I think of discipline, as much as I think of it as a very healthy thing and integral for training…I think it's very restricting." (Tom)

Figure 7: ArtsEd (2015). PaR Workshop. Tom, 'discipline'.

Contradiction

"I think of contradiction and I think of confliction, which is similar…I started to bring myself *out* and then I actually thought 'no, I'm being almost pulled', but then I was thinking 'no, it's not really being pulled' so then I restricted myself, but in an open space. Being really, really trapped…making yourself quite claustrophobic, in the middle of an open space." (Tom)

Figure 8: ArtsEd (2015). PaR Workshop. Tom, 'contradiction'.

Disciplinary crossover (or lack of crossover)

"This is quite literal, actually. It made me feel like banging my head against a wall. Why can't people communicate? You know, I remember the times when they could and when teachers *did* do that… Sometimes when they tried to relate it, it did feel like they were just doing it 'cos they felt should, rather than they actually believed how crossover of disciplines can make you better or improve training." (Tom)

Figure 9: ArtsEd (2015). PaR Workshop. Tom, 'disciplinary crossover (or lack of crossover)'.

Visual/aural environment

"Feeling like you're looking in a mirror all the time. Like you're being watched: you're watching yourself, you're asked to watch yourself, people are watching you and constantly trying to make yourself…thinner, visually. Taking my top off…well, that's just what you'd do…quite naked, quite exposed. I'm trying to suck my stomach in *so much*." (Tom)

Figure 10: ArtsEd (2015). PaR Workshop. Tom, 'visual/aural environment'.

Performing profession/vocation

"Trying to get *there*, trying to reach for something and feeling that you're trying to *obtain* something… It's not that you're not getting there but, actually, I was trying to relax back as well because there's some safety in staying where you are while you're trying to reach and obtain something, but at the same time trying to relax in the present…" (Tom)

Figure 11: ArtsEd (2015). PaR Workshop. Tom, 'performing profession/vocation".

"[A]s place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place"
(Feld, 1996: p.91)

CHAPTER TWO | EMBODYING THE ENVIRONMENTAL ENVELOPE: THINKING THROUGH THE SENSES

Recalling the experience of a live or recorded musical theatre performance can conjure subjective, fragmented memories of thrilling sights and sounds: being welcomed to 'The Rock' in *Come From Away's* rousing opening number; a flashback to the Fosse-esque dance moves of Julian Bleach's darkly comic Barkilphedro in *The Grinning Man*; and the spine-tingling moment at the beginning of *Les Misérables'* 'Look Down' created by the synchronous musical and visual effects–the rolling swell and crash of the cymbal as the gauze is swept out–as the saturnine setting is revealed. These examples also trigger the memory of an emotional connection and the possibility of somatic knowing or a felt sense arising from the sensory experience as an audience member. In considering the sights and sounds of musical theatre training, then, one might conjure an image of a performer belting out a power ballad or presenting a monologue, or of an ensemble of performers singing and dancing in a studio or theatre: pictures in which the musical theatre performer is engaged in the labour of her technical and creative interpretations of performance material. This imagery of the performer in the moment of live performance is reinforced in film and television representations and is commonly found in printed and online training institution prospectuses. These mental snapshots are frequently experienced in a physical form within the training environment, too, and I not suggesting that the activities which they document are unimportant in unpacking the culture of this training system. It is, however, my understanding that the aural and visual elements of triple threat training play a much more vital and complex role than meets the eye (and ear) in the earlier examples. In this chapter I examine the ArtsEd environment, attending to sight(s), sound(s) and the senses within the training domain, exploring key facets of these aspects to assess their significance in the training process. I draw on the findings from twelve ethnographic interviews conducted with ArtsEd musical theatre teaching staff in 2015 and my fieldwork, and use theories from performance studies, sound studies, acoustic ecology, anthropology (of the senses), social psychology and communication studies to elucidate the unique sensory environment of training.

Conditioning within the cocoon

The analogy between the triple threat training environment and a cocoon or the state of 'being cocooned' is a useful framework at this point as I introduce a number of significant concepts to further explain training. In relation to the life cycle of holometabolous insects, the cocoon

protects larvae during the pupa stage. The shell of the ArtsEd building can be likened to the sturdy integument that encases the larva. Although some cocoons can be transparent, many are opaque, resulting in a degree of uncertainty as to precisely what occurs within. Most pupae can be understood as a phase of resting due to appearing externally inactive, however, significant metabolic changes are occurring at this time. In the way that assumptions about inactivity are made based on the lack of transparency of the pupa, so I suggest that blind judgements are made about the triple threat's practice and training due to the 'closed door' nature of many training institutions. Alongside the key themes that I foreground in this chapter–sound, the visual, and (sensed) sociocultural norms–are themes that connect with the cocoon image. These include: training and/as protection; training as 'home'; the exclusivity of training; and the transience of training. Whilst there is not the scope within this thesis to undertake a detailed analysis of all of these themes, this analogy could certainly be developed beyond this chapter. I contend that comparing the training environment and a cocoon is useful, too, in emphasising the scale and significance of training and its impact on the triple threat performer. The focal point here, however, is training as a transformative process, within which, I will argue, the sensory environment functions as an essential tool.

In the first part of the chapter, I will consider how the ArtsEd soundscape might be explained and contextualised as a significant feature of the training environment. The second section marks a transition from the aural to include the visual component of the environment; I argue here that –whilst initially it can be useful to consider the sensory elements individually–it is imperative for the facets of sight and sound in this setting to be examined in tandem. The third section is concerned with the specificity of musical theatre as a discipline and as a training and performance practice. I suggest that the closed nature of training intensifies the sensory environment at ArtsEd, focusing the trainee and preparing her for the industry culture. Using themes developed from the case study data, I construct a sensory profile (Howes and Classen, 1991) for ArtsEd. I analyse the sights and sounds within the training setting, studying normative social and environmental behaviour to think about how the triple threat's learning process can be understood to extend beyond the confines of the studio space.

Interrogating the sui generis nature of the ArtsEd environment reveals how the staff and students create and constitute both culture and institution through the embodiment of certain behaviours. These findings are critical in furthering our understanding of the influence that

training may have on the triple threat's cultural frame of reference and her 'world sense'[1] in and after training. Investigating, for the first time, how the ArtsEd training environment is shaped by the members of its culture and how the environment, in turn, functions to shape the training process I build on Chapter 1, addressing the (problematic) themes of simplification, specificity and separation.

Classifying the ArtsEd soundscape

In conducting interviews with members of the ArtsEd musical theatre teaching staff, the challenge of finding a nook in the ArtsEd building that was unoccupied or, more importantly at this point, was not saturated with sound (which may have affected the recording of the interviews) was recurrent: the relentless sound signifying its impact on the environment. When asked to describe the day-to-day environment at ArtsEd, all of the participants commented using terms relating to sound. The intense sonic environment at ArtsEd is, undoubtedly, a distinguishing feature of the training milieu. In this section, I use the theme of sound as an access point to examine the sensory environment of training. Explaining the soundscape and how it operates is important as this establishes the senses and the sensorial context of training as a key factor of the ArtsEd experience. Assessing the usefulness of R. Murray Schafer's definition of 'soundscape' ([1977] 1994) in relation to the ArtsEd training environment, I turn to Ari Y. Kelman's critical genealogy of the term (2003) and to Jean François Augoyard and Henry Torgue's consideration (2005) of Schafer's definition. I investigate the attitudes of the ArtsEd staff towards the soundscape; consider how the particular sounds that dominate within the environment from day-to-day might be classified using Schafer's conceptualisation of the soundscape ([1977] 1994); and interrogate some of the characteristics that contribute to critical themes and subthemes as indicated by the ethnographic data.

The dominance of the aural

Three interviewees made firm assertions about the presence of perpetual sound. For example, one staff member remarked: "it's always loud, always. It is a kind of, it feels a massive noise, audio landscape, going on all the time"; and another described sound as "ever-present…it's absolutely a kind of montage of musical theatre sounds" (interview, 17 and 23 May 2015,

[1] The use of the frequently used term 'world view' is not merited in this instance: as David Le Breton asserts this visual metaphor reinforces "the valorization of sight that makes only a seen world possible" (2017: p.4). I have chosen an alternative description that makes possible the incorporation of all of the senses, in doing so recognising the environment and experience of musical theatre training as one that is multisensorial.

respectively). Whilst all of the participants spoke of the ubiquitous nature of sound, one averred that it is perpetually loud (interview, 17 May 2015). In contrast, another participant, in thinking about aurality as a daily pattern, revealed that there is a certain level of calm within the building in the mornings, suggesting that the sonic dynamic environment may vary depending on the time of day. The subtheme of loudness within the studio reverberates, however, through my fieldnotes:

> The drum beats, played by Karen, are heavily accented: the loudest ones are piercing on the ear. I almost flinch and, in succeeding to prevent this, succumb instead to an involuntary eye blink.
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, 8 May 2015)

> The recorded music is played so loudly that it sounds distorted. It remains at this level. (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, 23 June 2015)

'Background' sounds consistently leak into studios:

> The first tap exercise is performed unaccompanied, but flourishing piano music being played elsewhere in the building spills into the room. (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, 10 October 2014)

> People outside (studio) 21 tap noisily past. (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, 29 October 2014)

Although the aural environment may not be incessantly loud, *something* can *always* be heard in the building: during the working day, it is rarely difficult to find loudness *somewhere*. Outlining the progressive rise of a societal awareness of loudness and its effects, Mary Florentine states: "Loud sounds intrude on our enjoyment of life and affect our performance; loud background sounds interfere with our ability to hear sounds we want to hear and can create communication problems for everyone" (2012: p.1). Thinking about ArtsEd, however, perhaps Florentine's somewhat negative assertion can be inverted.

In classes, the teachers appear to be unphased by these sounds: they do not acknowledge the sounds that occur outside those core sounds that exist as a result of studio activities, their "ratings of annoyance" (Fastl and Florentine, 2010: p.200) seemingly unaffected by sound sources that one might assume to be pollutive. Evidence of this constant being overturned is recorded once during my fieldwork, when a Jazz tutor leaves the studio to address the noise being made by whooping students in the corridor. This suggests that the staff have become used to working within the clamorous environment, and this proposition is clarified by a number of

participants in their descriptions a period of auricular acclimatisation which followed the start of their contracts. One voice teacher commented (interview, 23 May 2015):

> It's chaotic, in a brilliant way. […] Looking back at my time here, I think apart from anything else the sort of aural bombardment is quite intense and I found myself in the first couple of weeks, incredibly tired, in a way that I hadn't been before, but doing similar hours to that that I'd done before, and I think a huge part of that, because […] a large part of my job is a kind of professional set of ears, I just wasn't prepared for the… There's not a moment in the day when there isn't some sort of audio stimulus… which is a wonderful, wonderful thing but it takes some adjustment to.

The resulting effect of this intense and continuous sonic stimuli aligns with what Kassler describes as "auditory fatigue", a temporary or permanent condition that "results in loss of auditory sensitivity so that loudness levels are increased, thereby decreasing the quality of life for those who cannot turn off the interfering and unwanted noise" (Kassler, 2013: p.330). Of particular interest here is that, whilst the "aural bombardment" described may function to discombobulate and fatigue newcomers to the training zone, the participants repeatedly framed the dominant soundscape as a constructive feature of training. One participant asserted: "These long days have become easier, strangely *because* of the noise". She recalled new members of staff questioning her about how she copes with the noise and how she had explained that "it's absolutely part of […] it" (interview, 16 May 2015). On the few occasions that sound was problematised by participants, this negativity was countered each time with a positive comment, for example, a description of the sonic effect as a "dreadful cacophony" is countered with "but it's a very exciting noise as well, because it's, you know where it's leading to eventually… which is something, very joyous" (interview, 17 May 2015). The agential promise attributed to the soundscape will be considered later in this chapter but, first, I will assess the challenges presented by using the term 'soundscape'.

Raymond Murray Schafer's 'soundscape'

Commonly referred to as the 'father of acoustic ecology', references to Schafer and his original conceptualisation of "the soundscape" in his book *The Tuning of the World* (1977) have echoed through sound studies scholarship since its inception. Whilst his book–reprinted in 1994 featuring a changed title to include the term 'soundscape'–may be considered as a seminal text within academia, Kelman points out that "in its wide circulation [the term 'soundscape'] has become disconnected from its original scholarly concept and used broadly to apply to any sonic phenomenon" (2010: p.212). In his article which is, arguably, the most comprehensive critique of Schafer's theory to date, Kelman takes issue with the variant usages of the idiom (both within

and outside scholarship), challenging interpretations that do not chime with the original meaning as coined by Schafer (2010: p.228). In its generalised form, the soundscape according to Schafer is "any acoustic area of study" ([1977] 1994: p.7). Admittedly, I have already employed the term 'soundscape' in this generic mode that Kelman censures. However, I suggest that this only reinforces the oxymoronically "useful and vexing" (Kelman, 2010: p.215) nature of the expression as it shaped by Schafer.

Concurrently, Schafer argues for a historical, idealised and particular phenomenon that has been lost. Considering "the transition from the rural to the urban soundscape", Schafer introduces two terms, "hi-fi" and "lo-fi" (Schafer, [1977] 1994: p.43). In the context of Schafer's work, emphasis is placed on problematising the ever-growing domination of the citified, 'lo-fi' environment, in which "individual acoustic signals are obscured in an overdense population of sounds" and "perspective is lost" (ibid: p.43). Drawn in contrast is the fading, rustic, 'hi-fi' setting: "one in which discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level" and "there is perspective – foreground and background" (Schafer, [1977] 1994, p.43). Whereas Schafer uses the example of the country as representative of a hi-fi environment and the city as specimen of the lo-fi, the interior of ArtsEd might be identified as displaying qualities of both of these categories; I will return to develop this line of thought presently.

Schafer urges the reader to join his pursuit of the quietness of the 'original' soundscape, yet it is his ideological and biased doctrine that limits the possibility of his quest from being furthered in the way in which he might have hoped. If, as Kelman suggests, Schafer's "vast and slippery explanation of the soundscape offers little or no workable model for studying the social life of sound" (2010: 22), the various approaches taken by scholars in their work in response to Schafer are perhaps unsurprising. Alain Corbin (1998) eschews Schafer's thinking; Adrian Curtin and David Roesner (2016) opt to acknowledge Schafer but favour alternative, more recent interpretations of the soundscape; and, as Kelman (2010) demonstrates, Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2006), Emily Thompson (2002), and Barry Truax (1984) choose to rework and redefine Schafer's soundscape in their work.

And yet, whilst he communicates a certain level of frustration with Schafer's theory, Kelman also makes a clear case for its value. Paradoxically, Schafer makes important the very aspect that he deems harmful, i.e. he foregrounds the background. In doing so, he identifies the indispensable significance of studying sound within its contextual frame (Kelman, 2010):

> To study sound means to attend to background noise not only as something to be tuned out or silenced, but as a critical component of acoustic phenomena, and making informed distinctions about sound is a social process in which context plays a crucial role. Schafer's term, then, continues to resonate because it suggests that the relationship between sound and context truly *does* matter to scholars of sound. His notion of the soundscape calls attention to the background of sound and suggests that attending to sound can amplify critical aspects of social and cultural life that otherwise fall on deaf ears (p.230, italics in original).

This assertion can be aligned with one of the overarching strands of this research: in order to better understand the triple threat and her training it is crucial to recognise training as an intricate nexus of contextualised elements. Thinking about the "montage of musical theatre sounds" (interview, 23 May 2015) described by staff members, I draw on Schafer's system of categorisation[2] to provide one way in which the experience of the daily sonic environment at ArtsEd can be depicted. Describing this process of systemisation as a primary step for the soundscape analyst, Schafer outlines three major themes: keynote sounds, signals and soundmarks. His definitions of these features are as follows ([1977] 1994):

> *Keynote* is a musical term; it is the note that identifies the key or tonality of a particular composition. It is the anchor or fundamental tone and although the material may modulate around it, often obscuring its importance, it is in reference to this point that everything else takes on its special meaning. Keynote sounds do not have to be listened to consciously; they are overheard but cannot be overlooked, for keynote sounds become listening habits in spite of themselves (p.9).
>
> Signals are foreground sounds and they are listened to consciously (p.10).
>
> The term *soundmark* is derived from landmark and refers to a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community. Once a soundmark has been identified, it deserves to be protected, for soundmarks make the acoustic life of the community unique (p.10).

The concept of sound was developed as a candidate theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006) during the first ethnographic fieldwork residency at ArtsEd, before being refined and defined as an overarching theme: the "dominance of the aural". Realising that the aural dimension was integral to the training environment, I began to incorporate short periods of time in the field during which I assumed a physically stationary position and worked specifically to tune in to the aural environment. These listening exercises, carried out in rehearsal and performance spaces and in spaces such as corridors, the canteen and the foyer during the working day, produced data

[2] Schafer goes on to discuss notation ([1997] 1994: pp.123-132) and provides a more comprehensive process for classifying sound ([ibid: pp.133-150).

revealing a number of sounds typical of the daily training setting. In the table below, Schafer's trio of themes are applied to these results:

Keynote sounds	Various forms of music (sometimes with voice) – piano, drums, percussive bells, recorded, solo singing, ensemble singing, breath.
Signals	Voices, footsteps (both choreographed and pedestrian), furniture being moved (frequently chairs scraping across the floor), doors opening and closing, music, applause, breath.
Soundmarks	The combination of particular teachers' voices (often heard delivering drawn out, rhythmic instruction) and particular students' voices.

Table 2: The ArtsEd soundscape: keynote sounds, signals and soundmarks

The content of the table does not provide an exhaustive list of the sounds heard in the building, but depicts the commanding and site-specific components experienced on a day-to-day basis, providing a useful starting point from which to develop this analysis of the ArtsEd training environment. All of the sounds listed above are human-made apart from recorded music, although this is, of course, operated and controlled by humans. Whilst Schafer castigates broadcast or recorded sound, maintaining that "the overkill of hi-fi gadgetry contributes generously to the lo-fi problem" (2004: p.35), this form is an integral component of musical theatre training's sonic environment and, in the main, of musical theatre practice and performance. Although there is not the space for it to be explored in this chapter, I believe that a compelling project lies in investigating the role of technology in musical theatre training and performance. What is important to note here is that, whilst in the industry the complex, ever-advancing technological operations within musical theatre productions might be considered to have become a spectacle in their own right, making these equally as impressive to some as the work of the performers, the ArtsEd training and performances are focused to remain centered on the performer and her ability (with technology playing a secondary role).

The training soundscape is guarded from the industrialised din to which Schafer objects: it is rare for the sounds of urban London to filter through the corridors and classes at ArtsEd. The windows of the building are seldom open, even in the summer months. In the frequently stifling, sweaty second floor studio 201 and third floor studio 301, windows are banned from being opened due to the potentiality of noise pollution seeping out of the ArtsEd building and affecting the residents who inhabit homes in the road below. The division between outside and in adds to a defined binary that separates the 'real' world and the training 'bubble'; it is a feature further explored in the final section of this chapter. Continuing to think about binaries, I now

position sight alongside sound to investigate elements of ArtsEd's visual culture. In the next two sections, I will explore how the ocular intersects the sonic to construct the training environment.

Validating the visual

Scoping out the soundscape

> It is a Tuesday morning in early November. I think it is raining outside (it certainly was when I arrived this morning) but realise that, from my seated position–on the wooden floor of the corridor on the ground floor of the building, next to a closed, locked door that leads to the dressing rooms and opposite the open double doors that lead to Studio 1–I cannot see a window to the outside world. I am very aware that an attempt to listen 'hard' in the hope of a clue as to what the weather is doing is likely to be futile. I do it anyway, dipping my head forwards and closing my eyes to focus my effort on the listening task. A door swinging open and the sound of hurried footsteps coming in my direction makes me raise my head in what feels like an involuntary action. The first year student scampering along the corridor clocks me and immediately slows, catching my eye and mouthing "sorry!" apologetically as he passes. In a somewhat meditative state, I offer what I hope is understood as a friendly smile. The student pulls open the door to Studio 10 and the loud, rhythmic sound of tap shoes meeting the floor intensifies. The door clicks closed behind him, punctuating the end of the tap exercise like a button.[3]
>
> The dull thud of a hammer can be heard sporadically. Sudden piano chords serve as a speedy introduction to a singing lesson as a female student can be heard practising the climactic end of 'Defying Gravity': "And if you care to find me, look to the Western sky…". The music is coming from Denys' room located on the left of the corridor ahead of me and I listen to the rendition, decontextualised from its musical, and wonder to whom the

[3] A musical theatre term used to describe an instrumental bump at the end of a musical number: often accompanied by an additional cue, such as a change in lighting state, the button signals to the audience to applaud.

soaring, disembodied voice belongs.

(ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, November 2014)

The sounds experienced at ArtsEd are rarely confined to the studio space. In the ethnographic interviews with staff members, when asked to describe the everyday training environment, every participant traced a journey characterised by singing, spoken word and (tap) shuffles:

> You're constantly walking past one place and somebody's in the studio, rehearsing a song and then you walk past the next and somebody's in the studio rehearsing tap.
>
> You come into the building and you will see people, probably a, a group of dan… of act… of students, doing a dance routine in the foyer, and then you'll move and you'll hear a lot of tap dancing in Room 10 and then you know two in the corner and you know somebody'll be rehearsing a song, and then there'll be other people in the corridor rehearsing a scene. … Or, as you walk down the corridor you hear it coming out of the studios, you open a co… a studio door, there will be somebody doing some activity.
>
> You walk the corridors and, and it's certainly very… someone working on a theatre tune and you hear people dancing and you'll hear, you can hear, you can hear tapping.
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [staff interviews], May/June 2015)

The majority of participants responded with a deictic verbal map: spoken descriptions were accompanied by hand and arm gestures, the staff members inscribed the air with a sense of their movement through the built environment. Tim Ingold points out that this mode of describing is common in the Western world: "people continue to describe their environment, to themselves and others, by retracing the paths of movement they customarily take through it rather than by assigning each of its features to a fixed location in space" (2000: p.233). The responses of the staff members can be understood to reinforce the dominance of the aural, but through their physical gestures and descriptions of what can be seen in the building they also provide insights into the visual environment. Considered alongside the aural dimension of the training environment, these assertions support patterns concerning the ArtsEd work ethic and training space and place. This is not a shift to using an ocularcentric frame but, exploring aspects of the optic environment in conjunction with the aural component, I will argue that it is through the analysis of both sonic and visual features that an acute understanding of the training environment is enabled. Incorporating the visual makes it necessary to reconsider the suitability of the term 'soundscape': according to Schafer, "A soundscape consists of events *heard* not

objects *seen*" ([1977] 1994, p.8, italics in original). Turning to sensory scholarship, specifically the fields of anthropology and (later in this chapter) sociology, proves to be particularly helpful here.

First, scholars of the senses, such as Howes and Classen (2013), Howes (2005), Ingold (2007), and Low (2012), have emphasised the importance of recognising and understanding the interrelatedness of the senses; not only thinking about the complex relationship between these modes of perception but also examining how the senses work differently within different contexts. Secondly, summarising the sensory turn within scholarship Low points out: "sensory studies argue for the senses as social, revealing important insights pertaining to selfhood, culture, and social relations" (2012: p.271). Thus, the approaches of sensory scholarship are apropos of the nucleus of this work and its attention to the humanness of the triple threat training experience. Howes describes the concept of the sensescape as "the idea that the experience of the environment and of the other persons and things which inhabit the environment, is produced by a particular mode of distinguishing, valuing and combining the senses in the culture under study" (Howes 2005: p.143). Similarly, Classen notes (1997):

> When we examine the meanings associated with various sensory faculties and sensations in different cultures we find a cornucopia of potent sensory symbolism. […] Together, these sensory meanings and values form the sensory model espoused by a society, according to which the members of that society "make sense" of the world, or translate sensory perceptions and concepts into a particular "worldview". There will likely be challenges to this model from within the society, persons and groups who differ on certain sensory values, yet this model will provide the basic perceptual paradigm to be followed or resisted (p.402).

Howes' definition of 'sensescape' and Classen's delineation of a 'sensory model' supports the anthropocentric approach which underpins my research. As Classen makes clear, the sensory model will always be subject to questions due to the subjective nature of experience but, largely, it offers a prototype open to response (ibid: p.402). In the previous section, sound is established as a commanding feature at ArtsEd. I suggest, then, that sound, its impact, and the way in which it is utilised within training–in conjunction with other sensory elements, some of which will be discussed in the following section–form what Howe might describe as a unique "patterning of sense experience" (1991: p.4) and Ong, "sensorial organisation" (1991: p.28) Utilising these conceptual frameworks enables a consideration of the triple threat training environment as multisensorial.

Reflecting the outcomes of the data analysis process, I prioritise the overarching themes of sound and vision: however, in the *Curated Interfaces*, other senses are considered and the audio and audiovisual files can be understood to further develop this sensory model of the training environment. Addressing concerns regarding a sensory hierarchy, Classen's notion of sensory models representing a foundational knowledge surfaces as useful (Maslen, 2015). Moreover, in explaining what can be seen and heard in the training milieu, I establish a sensory model which evidences other sensory modes at work, reinforcing Georg Simmel's assertion that "every sense delivers contributions characteristic of its individual nature to the construction of a sociated existence" (1997: p.110). Detailing the environmental, social and sensorial facets of training, I make connections between these and the characteristics brought about by the disciplinary specificities of musical theatre.

Towards a musical theatre sensescape

In the remaining part of this chapter I ask what it may mean to understand musical theatre training as a sensory practice. Howes and Classen' provide a "paradigm for sensing" (1991) and, in shaping a sensory profile for the ArtsEd training environment to explain themes developed from the ethnographic data, I draw on this framework. While the examples provided in Howes and Classen's model refer to 'exotic' non-Western cultures, by addressing a number of these divisions I identify how the dominant senses interact in the training environment and also how these sensory modes relate to the musical theatre industry into which training feeds. Sensory perception can be considered as "a cultural, as well as physical, act" (Classen, 1997: p.401). The training environment (and all that occurs within it) contributes towards the sensory conditioning of the trainee: resultantly, the trainee learns to embody sociocultural norms in preparation for the industry environment. Delineating ArtsEd's sensory profile, I examine some of these norms.

ArtsEd: a sensory profile

Language: what's the 'buzz'?

Considering how the senses are used in the language of the ArtsEd training pedagogies illustrates how references to sound, vision, proprioception/body awareness and the vestibular system/movement dominate the training discourse. I will discuss the importance of listening as part of the training process in Chapter 3: in order for the skill of listening to be developed, the

sense of hearing must occur. Howes and Classen suggest that the amount of onomatopoeia in any one language may reveal the relative significance of aurality (1997: p.262). Onomatopoeic terms feature across the ArtsEd musical theatre curriculum. In singing classes, terms such as "twang", "belt", "sting" and "*staccato*" are used and sound such as an aggressive "huh" are released to anchor the voice. In acting and, more particularly, in voice and speech lessons, sounds are studied phonetically and students engage in playful exercises that make sounds onomatopoeic. It is in dance classes, however, that onomatopoeia permeates the discourse of the teacher. French ballet terms are made onomatopoeic to reflect their meaning and to mimic the timing and quality of the movement: ""*pliii-éeeeeeeee*" (to bend), "*retiréeeee*" (to draw up), "*relev**é***!" (to snatch); teachers frequently describe the physical quality of a step or move with an exclamation such as "pow!", "choo!" or "bam!"; and some of the dance staff and visiting choreographers use sounds rhythmically–for example, "ga ga ga ga" or "ta ta ta ta"–in place of musical counts. These elements, then, connect the aural–a word or sound–to the kinaesthetic–the teacher or student's sense of her body moving–to the visual–the physical manifestation of the movement in the teacher or student's body.

Identified in the data as a sub-theme, "the 'buzz' phenomenon" features the onomatopoeic word "buzz", or variants of it such as "buzzy" and "buzzing", used by staff members to describe the ArtsEd environment:

> So it's a… it's a very…buzzing environment.
>
> It's *constant* buzz …and there's so much buzz and energy.
>
> I like the buzz… … …so I come in and there's a buzz about the place. … So it's not necessarily an audio buzz… because actually it's quite calm in the morning, vocally. … Yeah, no lunchtime it gets really buzzy.
>
> Oh, buzzy!
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [staff interviews], May/June 2015)

The word 'buzz' has different uses in various, contemporary contexts, such as 'buzzwords' and 'buzz marketing'. In the theatre industry, when asked why they perform, performers often reply that they "do it for the buzz" or because "it gives me a buzz". The 'buzz' articulated by the ArtsEd staff fits a number of definitions: "a low, continuous humming or murmuring sound, made by or similar to that made by an insect"; "an atmosphere of excitement or activity"; "a feeling of excitement or euphoria, a thrill; a general sense of excitement about or interest in

someone or something, as (…) generated by (…) word of mouth" (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). In the context in which the term is used by performers, the meaning usually aligns with the informal definition referring to feelings of exhilaration and pleasure. It is more difficult, though, to grasp a lucid meaning for the 'buzz' of which the tutors speak. Apart from one interviewee, the participants do not specify whether they are referring to the audio or visual environment (or to both). Could it be possible that the buzz that performers attribute to the experience of being onstage is the same buzz that is referred to in the training environment, intensified and protected by the enigmatic cocoon of the ArtsEd building? Is it magnified by the youth and hopefulness of the trainees?

It is hardly a coincidence that the word 'buzz' brings with it associations of the bee:

> I guess it's kind of a little bit like…*(thoughtfully)* erm, in a way… like the city, City of London, everyone kind of swarms into the, into the city, does their… goes straight to where they need to go and then people then start, have to have meetings or they move in different places and so it kind of, it kind of becomes quite amorphous and then all of a sudden errr… well actually there's no kind of lunch break or anything like that so it's kind of a wham bam instant kind of thing and then it all kind of… gently dissipates all around the building and then kind of drips out at the end of the day rather than everyone leaving at the same time.
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [staff interviews], May/June 2015)

Bringing to mind analogies of the insect world, the metaphor of the bee colony can offer a useful frame. Sergerberg, in focusing on the functions of metaphors of collective action, accentuates the way in which this device foregrounds beliefs regarding the formation of the action. She points out that "[t]his includes the kinds of people we might expect to act collectively together and the kinds of relations they might have with each other". (2012: p.36) Whilst it has been assumed that musical theatre training is shaped by authoritarian teachers dictating totalitarian regimes, an assumption that is questioned throughout this work, the emphasis within staff interviews delineates a practice that is based on collaboration, driven by both the sounds and sights of the everyday. Sergerberg (2012) confirms:

> The bee analogy, like other organic metaphors, primarily served to underscore the centrality of order: the harmony and unity of the parts and the whole. As an activity metaphor it also emphasized the virtuous agent, the selfless and hard-working insects whose individual interests, values and goals were continuous with those of the collective. (p.40)

Live theatre creates a highly-stimulating, emotionally charged, sensory-rich, collaborative environment: accordingly, perhaps it is unsurprising that the evidence presented to explain the ArtsEd environment suggests this is replicated in training. Both whilst auditioning and when employed in musical theatre, triple threat performers function within this particular kind of environment on a daily basis. More specifically, it is necessary for these practitioners to be able to flourish in this setting, demonstrating high-level technical precision and artistic flair in the moment of performance. The buzz phenomenon can be recognised as a sensed, sensory experience that is both desired and desirable, upon which ArtsEd students and staff members appear to thrive. A parallel can be drawn between this behaviour and what Kenneth Carter (2019) has called the "high sensation-seeking" person. It is useful at this point to "differentiate *sensations* (that is, information routed via distributed nerves and sense-system clusters) from *sensuous dispositions* (the sociohistorical construction of the sensorium, its reproduction over time and its alteration through contexts and technologies)" (Paterson, 2009: p.779, italics in original), but to recognise that one aspect, the buzz sensation, can be understood to affect the other, the ArtsEd staff member or student's sensuous disposition. Although it falls outside the scope of this thesis, further research on the performer as high-sensation seeker could produce pertinent results.

The built environment: sensing the spatial rules

Contemplating the physical appearance of the ArtsEd building enables the built environment to "be analysed as a projection of a given culture's sensory profile" (Howes and Classen, 1991: p.277). To support this analysis, it is necessary to provide some further details about the interior of the training building, as used by the musical theatre staff and students.

Students, staff and visitors enter the building through the main entrance on Bath Road and must pass through the electronic turnstiles, controlled either by a pass card or by the receptionist. Following significant renovation work in 2013, the foyer provides a spacious, bright, open welcome area. Effectively designed, aesthetically pleasing counters function as a student sign-in desk come box office, and another demarcates a bar area. The foyer serves the theatre, previously a 150-seat venue that has been remodelled to create the state-of-the-art, 200-seat, two-level, Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Theatre, also opened in 2013. A lift is in operation, but is only to be used by staff and visitors. An open doorway from the foyer area leads to management and administration offices; a wide staircase provides access to the upper

floors; and doors at each end of the foyer space leads to dressing rooms and the studio spaces. A spiral, second staircase is also used by staff and students.

The ground floor houses a second theatre which is a versatile studio space, six rehearsal studios, a number of small singing rooms (used for individual signing lessons), a cafeteria and canteen area, through which there is access to the small, detached library building. There are also changing facilities and cloakrooms for the second and third year students. The first floor is mostly occupied by what the staff and students refer to as 'the pupils' school', otherwise known as the ArtsEd Day School and Sixth Form: the Musical Theatre course uses a television and film studio on this floor and there is a staffroom for the staff of the Musical Theatre and Acting Schools. The second floor is shared by the School of Musical Theatre and the School of Acting. The musical theatre course uses a large dance studio, alongside which there is a number of small offices for occupied by Heads of Year and departmental heads, and changing facilities for the first year women. There is an also an open area with some desktop computers and a scattering of beanbags for the use of the musical theatre students. The third floor features two more studios used by the musical theatre course and a changing room for the first year men.

The physical setting of the ArtsEd. building affects the behaviours of students and staff and, in doing so, shapes the sensescape. McAuley (2000) provides important insights into the divided theatre space in her study of space in performance, and ArtsEd reflects some of the particularities McAuley describes. As I have already suggested using the cocoon analogy which frames this chapter, the day-to-day world of training is hidden from the outside world: this mirrors the professional theatre environment explored by MacAuley (2000). Drawing on Simon Callow's evocative depiction of the public-private divide within the theatre space, she explains: "backstage is the world of work, of craft, it belongs to those who have the skill to make it work, and it seems that their power to do this is in part dependent on keeping the reality of the theatre carefully hidden from the eyes of the profane" (McAuley, 2000: p.64). Musical theatre training tends to follow this creed of working behind closed (outer) doors. In doing so, the students are not only able to train in a 'safe space', but are introduced to–and begin to enact–an important ideological principle of theatre.

Another parallel can be drawn with McAuley's comparison of the often drastic contrast between the glamour and grandeur of the spaces occupied by the audience and the "cramped squalor" (Hopkins in McAuley, 2000: p.65) that characterises the practitioner spaces. Although the

ArtsEd building appears, from the outside, large and imposing, and the internal space is cleaned daily and is therefore far from being squalid, the school outgrew its premises many years ago and, at times, the students' space in the studio is compromised. Furthermore, like the backstage theatre areas McAuley describes,"[t]he practitioner's experience is framed as fundamentally utilitarian" (2009: p.69): the (few) chairs and (necessarily) bare studios are a stark contrast to the plush, cherry red, velvet seats that dress the school's Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Theatre, which remain behind the usually locked theatre doors, reserved for the paying public. The packed musical theatre timetable limits the student's use of the canteen and, reflecting the rudimentary nature of the social spaces made available within the theatre building (McAuley, 2000), the small social space on the second floor is not only rarely occupied by students, but the design and location of the area–it is open-plan and passed by anyone using the main staircase–contributes toward an atmosphere of surveillance.

The rehearsal studios in the ArtsEd building are dynamically fluid: through certain kinds of practice one place–a ground floor studio–can become a space for a ballet class, a 'professional' rehearsal room, a casting studio, a theatre space. This is made possible by the nuanced behaviours of the trainees and teachers: whilst there is a sense of acoustic and optic openness in the training environment, disciplinary and cultural rules affect and direct the sensescape. These sensory boundaries are important because they can be considered as a projection of the performer-training-industry loop, and the training locus can be recognised to represent a micro-industry which prepares the trainee for the industry environment. To draw out the significance of behaviour is crucial here: reflecting Howes and Classen's sensory model–and its engagement with sociocultural sensory profiles and their practices being learned from person to person–I assert that behaviours that can be seen and heard in the training environment function as a constitutive element of ArtsEd's sensorial composition. Furthermore, while it is useful to use Howes and Classen's model to draw out and explore (mostly) singular themes developed from the data, turning to consider training behaviours is to recognise that the senses are, more often than not, interacting with each other from moment to moment.

The (omni)presence of staff members: teachers as cultural role models

Considering staff members as cultural role models in this sensory analysis is not to move away from the senses, but is to acknowledge what Matthew Fulkerson has called "sensory pluralism" (2014). More particularly, Fulkerson points out that as the all of the sensory modalities interact, they "do so pervasively at multiple levels of sensory processing, with effects at all levels of our

psychology (subpersonal, behavioral, and phenomenal)". Shortly, I will detail a moment in which many senses are recognised to be at play.

The data indicates the ArtsEd musical theatre staff to be a vital and influential part of the training community. Traditionally, a consideration of the teacher-student relationship within musical theatre training might be focused on the studio-based, instruction-centered, body-to-body transmission of knowledge relating to acting, singing, and dancing. A profoundly significant aspect of triple threat training, this facet will be considered in the next chapter. What I am interested in here, however, is how teachers can be understood to be influencing students outside the formality of classes, demonstrating normative behaviours that encourage certain ways of conducting one's self. To evidence this I will explain an an incident in the field, focusing on the behaviours of Jill, a member of the musical theatre staff. The account below features as the first narrative entry in my field notes, recorded during the morning of my first residency at ArtsEd, London. The moment described occurs within around ten minutes of arriving at the school:

> As we (Chris and I) walk along a second-floor corridor and through a set of double doors, my senses and steps are directed towards an unfolding happening. I hear laughter, before coming upon a group of Musical Theatre students standing with their backs to us. Peering through the group to observe the focus of these giggles, I see Jill-Louise Hydes (Jazz Tutor and Head of Third Year). She is sitting on the floor, leaning back against a door, legs up and splayed in an open 'V' shape. Seeing Chris and I, Jill exclaims, "I'm only on the floor because I was so much 'on my leg' I fell over…!". I greet Jill, who extends her arm towards me, signalling a want to get up. I slip through the group and take Jill's hand. When I have pulled her up, she puts her arms around me, giving me a hug. By way of introduction, Chris asks Jill, "You remember Janine, don't you?" She responds, "Of course I remember Janine! How are you?"
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, 6 October 2014)

This incident exemplifies some of the normative behaviours witnessed in the ArtsEd environment. There is little that is extraordinary about suggesting that a teacher models

behaviour, but what is important here is that Jill can be recognised to be reinforcing notions that contribute towards the constitution of the ArtsEd training ideology. Central to this system of ideas is the embodiment of a distinct attitude: this is arguably one of the most radical features of training. The case study shows that there is an expectation from the staff that students will espouse an attitude that befits musical theatre training and the musical theatre industry, and I assert that one of the key approaches to the students' development and maintenance of this attitude can be identified through an understanding of the staff members as models of the desired behaviour.

One of the attitudinal characteristics displayed by Jill and, indeed, by the whole musical theatre faculty, is that of an unshakeable work ethic. Thinking about the moment described above, Jill demonstrates this by drawing the attention of those present to her commitment to her own technique and to her determination to help the students by way of a physical demonstration. In doing so, she justifies what might otherwise be considered as 'failing', i.e. falling over. Also of relevance is the fact that Jill is working outside the spatial and temporal boundaries of a timetabled class, reinforcing a norm about being wholly dedicated to the craft[4] and prioritising this over all else. The theme of time pressure, considered in Chapter 3, is highlighted implicitly and Jill's behaviour is indicative of the 'single focus' described by ArtsEd principal, Chris Hocking, discussed in Chapter 1.

Normative behaviour relating to tactility, bodily contact and physicality is also evidenced during this incident, both in Jill's demonstration to the students and in our conversation. Her speech is punctuated with clear gestures and she initiates physical contact by reaching out her arm to me, instigating the sensory modality of touch. This behaviour points towards another norm which relates to the prevalence of corporeal contact in the training environment. Physical contact between staff member/student and between students is used consistently across the musical theatre disciplines at ArtsEd to facilitate learning. Considering the impact of contact in educational settings, Korthargen et al. describe contact as "a momentary experience related to an encounter in the here-and-now, although in some cases it may last for several minutes" (2014: p.23). These social experiences are defined as "contact moments" (ibid: p.23) and I suggest that

[4] There is interesting ambiguity in Jill's role here as she can be identified as both teacher and musical theatre performer and, therefore, her professional craft is characterised by her capacities as both pedagogue and theatre practitioner.

this is a useful descriptor to employ for scenarios such as this one. The prevalence of these contact moments between staff member and student can be understood to reinforce the dedication of both parties to the learning process and to the development of solid interpersonal relationships. That trainees are frequently observed by staff members outside formal lessons emphasises a culture of surveillance: I discuss this matter in relation to ethics in Chapter 4. In summing up this sensory profile, it is useful to turn to Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) concept of *habitus*.

Sensing habitus in the training environment

In order to consider *habitus*, one must also consider the notion of the 'field'. A field, according to Bourdieu, is a unique, relational space in which tensions exist: as a consequence, therefore, the field is also space characterised by struggles which generate change (1986). Approaching these struggles, every agent calls into play the capital which she possesses and her *habitus*. A product of social experience and education, *habitus* is an acquired collection of embodied dispositions (Bourdieu, 1993: p.86). In a similar way to that described by Angela Pickard (2012) in her study of the affective schooling of the body of the young ballet dancer, musical theatre training can be recognised to acquire (and I substitute Pickard's language here) "an unconscious [musical theatre] *habitus*" (2012: p.27). Although Pickard's research subjects, all of whom are between ten and fifteen years old, are younger than the ArtsEd Musical Theatre student–she must be at least eighteen years old when embarking on the degree course–both inhabit or have inhabited "a number of different social worlds all with their own *habitus*" (ibid: p.43). ArtsEd students can be recognised as beginning their training journey having already acquired their personal/familial or individual *habitus*, but this primary habitus can be understood to be developed in the training environment with a secondary, institutional (Reay, 2001) *habitus*. Cocooned in the ArtsEd building, in (re)enacting sensory and social norms trainees and tutors appear to be creating, what Neil Leach has called, "spaces of belonging" (2002). This notion of belonging binds together identity and place: "It suggests a way in which communities might colonize various territories through the literal performances – the actions, ritualistic behaviour and so on – that are acted out on a given architectural stage, and through those performances achieve a certain attachment to place" (Leach, 2002: p.79). The themes that I have discussed in this chapter–the dominant soundscape, the visual and aural evidence of students and staff members constantly engaged with the training practice, and the 'buzz'–characterise the unique spirit of the building.

In this chapter I have challenged representations of musical theatre training which limit its sensory profile to images of the performer in the moment of performance, arguing that the sonic, optic and social environment of training plays a crucial role in preparing the student for the professional environment. The cocoon analogy has supported clear insights into how the training environment impacts the trainee and staff members. Whilst insect metamorphosis relates to physical development, it also often signifies behavioural changes. To further explain the ArtsEd sensescape I have explored some of these established social, environmental and sensory behaviours, normalised in the training environment. I have indicated how pedagogical approaches outside the studio space can be understood to shape the student's behaviours which, in turn, impact the dynamics of the training environment.

To interpret the ArtsEd environment as being shaped by the social, sentient bodies of the musical theatre students and staff is to recognise, too, that any 'sensory culture' should be defined as "shifting and modified" (Pink, 2009). As humans, we are not able to escape or erase our individual sensory biases: in producing this sensory profile, I have responded to specific themes developed from the ArtsEd case study data and, as a result, this model is contextually, positionally, and temporally-bound. It aims, however, to illuminate key characteristics of the ArtsEd environment which contribute to the richly sensorial setting of training. These critical features contribute to the development of embodied, institutional, musical theatre *habitus*–firmly and necessarily emplaced (but not permanently fixed) in the musical theatre trainee's body–and can be identified as an influential factor of the trainee's transformation into an ArtsEd triple threat performer.

CURATED INTERFACE (2) | *Sensing (shadows) in the studio*

> Being there seeing, hearing and meditating; being here dreaming, remembering, and inscribing.
> (Barbara Tedlock, 2011: p.331)

This is an interface that addresses "the shadow side of fieldwork" (McLean and Leibing, 2007). We represent ourselves and others present themselves: negotiating identities as ArtsEd graduates, professional practitioners, trainees, teachers, and researchers. Shocks and surprises (Sparkes, 2002), shifts, slippages and shadows are identified as we shape stories to make sense of the ArtsEd training experience.

The seemingly straightforward task of putting out feelers about the practice as research workshops with ArtsEd graduates is more complicated than initially anticipated. Writing an invitation asking graduates to participate in research workshops, I realise that I am performing my own reconfigured identity resulting from my move into academia: enthusiastically reeling off the details of my project, research problem and the purpose of the workshops using academic language and discipline-specific terminology. The edited version of the invitation which I forward to potential co-researchers seeks to be linguistically 'lighter', to adopt a cheery tone, to suggest a sense of fun that might appeal to the receiver, but it leaves me with a sense of unease. Will those invited be interested in revisiting their training experiences? In working with professional performers, should I be paying informants for their practice-based involvement in my research? Is it just me who is fascinated in how our memories take shape? I am drawn in to Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis's (2014) affirmation:

> *When we find ourselves asking about an intriguing experience, we also try to connect with others who have had, and have written about, similar experiences. In connecting with others, we move from what is happening inside our bodies, hearts, minds, and lives and out into what is happening in culture. Indeed, we are always in culture and culture is always in us, but a new awareness around an experience encourages us to connect our selves and others' selves in tangible and meaningful ways. (p. 70, emphasis in original)*

Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis (2014) contemplate what may stir up the urge to create an autoethnography and it is my conviction that, whilst ArtsEd graduates may not have 'written' about their experiences, coming together to explore our own individual histories of training at ArtsEd will enable a rich, collective training history to be produced which has the potential to inform future training. In this interface, significant aspects emerging from the execution of auto/ethnographic and PaR processes are investigated: unpicking these features supports insights into the complexities of researching lived experience. How do I negotiate my role as an insider/outsider of training? What did it mean to be an ArtsEd triple threat trainee and what does it mean now?

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS (1): Research diary entry, 26th April 2015

My route from the Underground platform to the main railway station at Paddington has been well-rehearsed. My ArtsEd acting tutor's advice about the importance of punctuality impressed on me, the maxim "train before the train" has become my own and this, along with the powerful draw of my 'homeplace' (hooks, 1990) means that I am almost always at the station well before my train leaves. My track to the Bristol Temple Meads train, then, is diverted up the escalator to pick up an Americano from Starbucks or is, occasionally, directed towards Sainsburys to pick up a 'gin in a tin' and, prior to the store's closure in 2012, may well have included a trip to Cranberry for a handful of carefully chosen dried fruit and nuts. Paper coffee cup in my right hand, rucksack on my back or the handle of my compact travel case erect with the fingers of my left hand curled around the handle. My weight is placed through my left leg but shifts between both sides of my body in a gentle rocking motion, both to counter the nip in the station air and to press into action the electronic departures board, urging a platform number to appear. Alert, focused, full of intention: I am readily rooted by my anticipatory state.

This evening, despite committedly carrying out the familiar rituals that I have come to associate with this return journey, I am particularly aware of my inner dialogue playing narrator to the story of my station choreography. I replay the day's events, suppressing the urge to pull my phone from my pocket and make notes. It is not until I am tucked into a window seat on the moderately busy Bristol-bound train that I am able to locate my gilt-edged notebook and pen and, fearing forgetting, write furiously as I assimilate the day-long, PaR workshop which I have just coordinated.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS (2)

The first PaR workshop takes place in the first floor studio at Chiswick Theatre Arts (CTA), just off Chiswick High Road. Having worked at the performing arts school between the years 2009 and 2012, returning to the building stirs up vivid memories of my experience as a CTA employee. Arriving an hour before the scheduled start of the workshop, I push open the door of the building, which is slightly ajar. The décor of the spacious reception area is much busier than I remember, its walls are hung with history documenting the school's annual performances and recent production images. Sitting at the reception desk is Annie, an ArtsEd musical theatre student whom I observed during my first fieldwork residency. As her expressive, doe eyes meet mine, she grins and lets out an endearing Geordie "eeeeeeee, hello!" and I realise that I am

wholly unsurprised to see an ArtsEd student occupying this position and would likely have been very surprised if this had not been the case. The encounter gives rise to a sense of circularity, nostalgia, gratefulness and privilege as I walk up the familiar staircase to the second floor studio. I lay out the materials in readiness for the arrival of my co-researchers: a line of poppered, plastic wallets each containing a participant information sheet, consent form, a notebook and a pen. My stomach flutters at the possibility that coming together again promises: how might being in the physical presence of each other prompt us to recall our training experiences? Do we share common memories and how do we choose to narrate them? Who are we now and who were we then?

THE AUDITION

We are left in Studio 201 on the second floor to warm up for the dance audition. The audition panel enters and we are introduced to a pregnant Jill-Louise Hydes, who will teach the routine. I have been unprepared to recognise a face as my mind throws forward a flashback:

"Aaaaaaaaaand JILL-LOUISE HYDES!" The petite, dynamic redhead springs out, executes the Fosse hat trick and finds her space with the other cast members for the final curtain call of the 2001 London West End production of 'Fosse'. My friend, Spencer, and I huddle together outside the stage door in the bitingly cold January air as we wait to ask cast members to sign their autographs in our precious souvenir brochures. Jill wears a hat pulled down over her red bob and I am fascinated by her shift into anonymity as she heads away from the theatre down Charing Cross Road.

To audition, I am wearing a black leotard, red trousers and Capezio dance trainers. We do a technical pirouette exercise in pairs that covers the length of the studio. I peel off as I come close to the table where the panel sit, but Jill catches my hand: "They haven't seen you yet!". She asks me to roll up my trousers and sends me back to the far end of the room to pirouette again.

MEET AND GREET

The time lag between my training and my return as a researcher has seen a number of staff members leaving the school and new members of staff joining the ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course. Marissa and Jules are job-sharing receptionists, new to me and very friendly indeed. I do not have an electronic pass to gain access so am obliged to rely on the receptionist to let me in. Denys–a musical theatre singing repertoire tutor–can often be observed sitting on a chair at the back of the tiny reception office and quietly taking in those who come and go. When

I was a first year at the school, he taught me for a term: he was engaged, witty, contemplative, and a supremely talented pianist. Small in stature, with a distinctive hairstyle: his white hair always backcombed into an impressive quiff, a neat ponytail secured at the nape of his neck, and long white sideburns. I realise that I have not considered his age before as, somehow, in training, age becomes irrelevant. His eyes catch mine and we smile, greeting each other with an affirmative nod and a mouthed "hello" – a strong instinct tells me to respect our gentle exchange and not to probe further. Some meetings with staff members are warm, joyous and uplifting. Walking down the main stairs one afternoon early in my first fieldwork residency, a familiar face glances up at me and does a double take. I feel a wide smile spreading across my face as native New Zealander Tim, also a musical theatre singing repertoire tutor, exclaims: "What the fuck are you doing here?!" He quickly extends his arm around my back, pulling me towards him and hugging me tightly. Familiar with his frankness and welcoming his informality and tactility, I return his embrace. A comparable meeting is experienced with the wonderfully charismatic David Ashley and, also, with Ian Good.

Please listen to Audio Track 4 now:
David Ashley & Second year BA (Hons) Musical Theatre students, G & S rehearsal, ArtsEd, 2014.

ARE YOU IN OR OUT?

I am an outsider who is inside. I am an insider who is outside. As soon as I step off the bus on Turnham Green Terrace or exit Turnham Green Underground Station in the morning, I am aware that I am likely to meet ArtsEd students and employees: people who will, naturally, make a subjective judgement about my insider/outsider status in relation to ArtsEd. Anastacia Kurylo points out that these terms are slippery, noting that we have multiple group identities which oscillate depending on which ones are important in a particular interaction (Naaeke et al., 2011)., Similarly, Michael Grawbowski suggests that in approaching a social group we are all insiders and outsiders, and "the dynamic between the two poles of the dichotomy shifts as we both integrate ourselves within and distance ourselves from the group" (Naaeke et al., 2011: p.158). These varying, changing behaviours are reflected in my interactions with ArtsEd (permanent and visiting) staff members.

I am observing, for the first time, a third year show rehearsal in the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Theatre. The production team includes a professional director, musical director and choreographer. There is an engaging air of excitement, a sense of urgency, and of a collective, conscious channelling of energies: everyone here is caught up in the busyness and business of mounting this production. "Janine? Is this useful for you?" I turn to the voice – it is the director calling down to me from the grand circle. I smile and nod, offering a clear "yes!" in response. He smiles back at me: "I think you'll do fine… I think you'll pass." … A few minutes later, the choreographer–who standing to my left in the stalls–addresses me: "Janine, will you just do me a massive favour? Will you just sit in those front side seats and see if there's a problem with the sight lines?" I do. "That's great, thanks."

I check in with the director at the end of the rehearsal, asking whether I am able to watch another rehearsal in a couple of days (on Wednesday). He explains that it will be the 'producers' run' which will be watched by the entire executive staff; there will be cameras present, and he is concerned about adding another observer to a space which will be infused with tension. I am told that I am very welcome to observe rehearsals tomorrow (Tuesday) or on Thursday.

Please engage with Audiovisual Track 1 now:
***Catch Me If You Can* rehearsal video, ArtsEd 3rd year BA (Hons) Musical Theatre students, 2014. Photography/videography ©Adam Hills. Used with permission of the creator.**

I have aimed to prepare myself for the possibility that my positionality may confuse or challenge informants. Alongside each informant, I am co-choreographer of the "ethnographic dance": a carefully conducted improvisation "mediated by social distance, rules of politeness, and the anthropologist's ethical concerns about exploitation and rudeness" (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer, 2007: p.43). How do I address and write about being refused access to a class ore rehearsal? How do I explain to the staff member who explains that the students "won't be doing anything [but] a lot of paperwork" that I am still keen to observe, or that the "boring class" in which you will "just be watching a video" is of great interest and importance to me?

My 'insider' status is actualised by the staff members who taught me as a student at ArtsEd, with whom I have a pre-existing connection and shared history. The temporal, physical, and

psychological distance from my own training–and the learning curve of life in between then and now–means that I am able to feel comfortable in maintaining a close distance or a distant closeness to the "old intimates as research subjects", remembering and responding appropriately to interpersonal dynamics of power, duty, and status (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer, 2007: p.42). On frequent occasions, both Chris and David, respectively, ask me when I am going to come and "do class?" As I am preparing to watch a Performance Class one afternoon, Tim, seated at the piano, catches my eye and mouths: "Wanna sing?" Observing a first year ballet lesson, Sandra turns to me: "Janine, I want you to do something. I want you to stand here and, girls, every time you *balancé* to the right I'd like you to look at Janine, and every time you *balancé* to the left I'd like you to look at me." Returning to begin my second ArtsEd fieldwork residency, Sandra asks if I am able to see a difference in the ballet students and, on responding that I can, she asks me to tell this to the class. During my periods of observation, I am offered sheet music, paper handouts, explanations of exercises, comments about individual students and about the collective mental and physical states of class groups, Galaxy Minstrels, Liquorice and Aniseed boiled sweets, and cups of tea and coffee. I am addressed using terms of endearment, David often kisses my hand at the end of ballet classes and ensures the students bow or curtsey to me during reverence, and Jill plays affectionately with my hair, looping her fingers through my ponytail and twirling it around her hand.

THE HAUNTED PRESENT: Research diary entry, 17th October 2014

"The ethnographic life is not separable from the self" (Richardson, 2000: p.253). The auto/ethnographic life is an exhausting privilege. Not only am I full to overflowing with fieldnotes and "headnotes" (Sanjek, 1990), but with bodynotes and heartnotes. And yet, watching the youthful, leaping bodies before me, it feels strange to confess that this act of observing causes such fatigue.

PROGRESSING THE PAST: Research diary entry, 27th April 2015

Returning to my notes from (the first PaR workshop) yesterday, I feel able to begin to consolidate my thoughts with more clarity. Reflecting on what I can only describe as my own pumped up state as I journeyed home from London, I have to remind myself that the memories I am unpacking are not, nor cannot be, limited to my ArtsEd training experience. Neither does it work to attempt to direct all of my focus and energy into a specific strand of my past: returning

to the CTA building and has evoked another set of episodic memories – I have come to the realisation that these need revisiting en route.

> "To see that memory is reliant upon place, is at the same time to see that memory is not simply a stock set of images stored away from recall at will. Instead, memory is reconceived as a many-layered palimpsest of association in conjunction with a similarly many-layered palimpsest of places upon which are written our history, traditions, experiences, and ideas".
>
> (Janet Donohoe, 2014: p.*xii*)

SENSING A SHADOW

My employment at CTA begins just as the school is about to move location: from a tiny dance shop with its postage-stamp sized basement studio complete with fairy wall murals to its purpose designed premises with facilities over three floors, featuring two 800sq ft dance studios equipped with sprung dance floors, full length mirrors and ballet barres. Following an informal interview at the shop with school principal, Georgina, it is verbally agreed that I will teach a one hour and forty-five minute children's musical theatre class, Stageworks Juniors, on Saturday mornings, (wo)manning the reception desk before and after the class. On Mondays I will work a full day on reception and, on Tuesdays, a half day. On Wednesday mornings, I journey to Kings Cross St. Pancras to travel to Nottingham, where I am contracted as choreographer of *Sweet Charity* for the final year students of the three year Professional Musical Theatre Diploma course at the Midlands Academy of Dance & Drama (MADD). I stay at a boxy B&B and return to London on Friday evenings, joining the rush of commuters and arriving home at my rented flat at around 9pm. The opening of the new CTA studios is an exciting time for the young school and principal, Georgina, drives her business with an intense entrepreneurial attitude. My role at the school quickly develops. I am 'Miss Janine' to a sweet gaggle of tiny ballet-slippered dots. I am the friendly, smiling face of the CTA reception. I teach music and movement classes to pre-schoolers; ballet, modern, tap, ballroom and commercial dance to children between the ages of two and fifteen; adult ballet and jazz classes; one-to-one dance lessons; and provide public speaking coaching to adults. I am a babysitter for three-year old Maya, one of my Stageworks pupils. I am a children's party co-ordinator and entertainer for CTA, running between one and four two-hour long, themed, children's birthday parties per weekend, as required. Around (and sometimes interrupting) this work timetable, I attend castings and auditions. I am up every

morning at 5:45am and out pounding the pavements of West London – running keeps me grounded, energised, fit, functioning, focused, and provides both a sense of freedom and a sense of control. But my life as an auditioning performer is mentally arduous.

At CTA, my "yes, let's!"[1] attitude has generated fruitful financial opportunities and I am particularly grateful that the school's studios, where I carry out the majority of my work, is in close proximity to my rented accommodation. Being part of a very small team working for a newly established business venture, however, results in my job description extending to include less than desirable tasks. On Monday mornings, arriving at the studios, I am greeted by a to do list requiring me, amongst other jobs, to vacuum then mop the two studio floors, clean the studio mirrors, and vacuum the reception area and two flights of stairs. I am not averse to cleaning, but these regular menial tasks make me feel like I am being used as a stooge. Dutifully, I carry out the jobs, challenging the mundane and attempting to use the experience to my advantage by putting on a backing track and rehearsing my singing repertoire. Sometimes, I cannot resist the temptation of the lone piano in the corner of Studio 2 and sit down to play…

A TASK

Thinking about your aspirations, write down eight notions that were really important to you whilst you were training. Map these - put them in a format or layout that makes sense to you. Following this, write new/adapt/eliminate these notions/characteristics for what is important to you/what you aspire to now. Then, one at a time, remap the Post-Its.

[1] "Yes, let's!" is the name of a fast-paced, high-energy improvisation game, commonly used as part of a drama warm-up. One person leads, making a suggestion: "Let's all be …!" The group must respond enthusiastically: "Yes, let's!" This is followed by everyone performing the leader's offering with vim and vigour. The exercise encourages performer to be accepting in her practice and to avoid blocking (herself or her co-performers).

THEN AND NOW: MAPPING IDENDITY PAST AND PRESENT

Figure 12: PaR Workshop (2015). Mapping our lives.

Ellie:
Then: funny
Then: memorable
Then: quick
Then: fiesty
Then: popular/fit in
Then: "big personality"
Then: savy [sic]
Then: confident
Now: hold on to family and friends
Now: physically look better, feel better, more flexible
Now: want to have more time to think and contemplate
Now: enjoy having time for people
Now: be more intelligent and up to date with the world!
Now: sense of stability/grounded
Now: fit in/popular + of value
Now: feel confident but sometimes wish I had less desire to be liked
Now: completeness
success
good at something

Figure 13: PaR Workshop (2015). Mapping our lives.

Emily:
Then: Resilient
Then: Strong
Then: Confident
Then: Memorable
Then: Accepted
Then: Able to fit in
Then: Team player
Then: Approachable
Now: Large network for friends
Now: Determined (fitness)
Now: Stand up for myself
Now: Proud of myself
Now: Strong

Janine:
Then: to be liked
Then: to be understood
Then: fitness and looks
Then: to be better
Then: to work with like-minded people (friends)
Then: recognition
Then: work (in the performance industry)
Then: to live an actor's life
Now: to be authentic
Now: to be fulfilled
Now: to learn/grow
Now: happy
Now: quality time with family
Now: good relationships
Now: health
Now: a house
Now: financial security

Figure 14: PaR Workshop (2015). Mapping our lives.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS (3)

The first PaR workshop takes place. I am over a year and a half into my PhD study and have carried out my first fieldwork residency at ArtsEd: resultantly, a process of revisioning my training history is firmly underway. In designing the event, I have purposefully avoided locating the workshop at ArtsEd to enable a focus on questions about training and how it might remain in the body, and to allow informal discussions to stimulate individual and collective processes of remembering. It is *so* wonderful to see people. Hannah M.'s melodic laugh and open spirit; Em's unassuming character; Ellie's quirky sense of humour; Conleth's wicked raconteuring.

The warm-up task is taken very seriously and performed quietly: afterwards, in asking my co-researchers to respond to the exercise–articulating what they had chosen to do and reflecting on how their warm-up felt–the 'wait time' is lengthy. (This is not something that I perceive to be a problem, I am more concerned that I might have made informants feel uncomfortable or pressured into a verbally articulated response – as if I am putting them on the spot.) Using verbal cues to trigger memories of the training experience, we become animated, contemplative, indignant, nostalgic: stories pour out as we pore over our pasts.

The strength of our shared training experience holds fast. But some of our memories and reflections reveal idiosyncratic attitudes to training. When Hannah M. tells us that she will always wonder whether she went to ArtsEd to satisfy her mother's desire for her to be a performer, I am (unusually) dumbstruck. As I conduct this study and as we dig up our buried dreams, I find that I am learning more about my self. Exposing our vulnerabilities in writing and research leaves us open to feedback from others that could be either affirming and encouraging or pathologizing (Etherington, 2004). Yet, autoethnography necessitates these risks: connecting the personal to the cultural (Ellis and Bochner, 2000), understanding the subjective as social. Sarah Wall (2008) writes eloquently about the tensions which characterise autoethnographic practice and David Purnell asserts that, as autoethnographers, we must "face the shadowy manifestations of our autoethnographic hauntings" (2017, p.87).

THE HAUNTED PRESENT (2): 10th June 2015

The piano chords marking the introduction to the third year students' vocal warm-up act as a brief forewarning for what is about to happen: the ensemble of voices overscore my attempts to observe. My tongue pressed hard against the back of my top front teeth, I tilt my chin up and quickly blink and swallow, willing the tears which blur my vision to evaporate before they escape down my cheeks. It is the second time during my fieldwork that I have felt the need to suppress my overwhelming emotions. How do I explain this emotionality? How do I present the significance of this vicarious experience? What is it exactly that causes the deeply connective moment? "[J]ust when my heart thinks it has all the pieces together, everything falls apart" (Pelias, 2004, p.171).

Please listen to Audio Track 5 now:
Third year vocal warm up, BA (Hons) Musical Theatre students, ArtsEd, 2015.

CHAPTER THREE | CREATING TRAINING, TRAINING CREATIVITY

Working in the creative industries, within the creative environment of the theatre building, the triple threat performer employed in a musical theatre production can create her onstage character(s) around four hundred times in a year-long run. Yet she may not be recognised as a creative, nor is she likely to be referred to as such in the programme or souvenir brochure. This common representation–which segregates 'cast' and 'creatives'–continues to dominate theatre and performance documentation and discourse. In this chapter I explore the effects which this naming has upon performer, training and industry and examine how creativity functions in the ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course. At a musical theatre symposium (*We Said We Wouldn't Look Back: British Musical Theatre Research and Practice*, University of Winchester, 21 May 2016), the developing relationship between new writing for musical theatre and the academy emerged as a key theme for discussion. Scholars expressed a keen interest in developing opportunities for university students to work with industry professionals on new writing projects, exchanging performers, technical equipment, space and time for writers, composers and original material. With an implicit nod towards Ericcson et al.'s (1993) well-known expert performance theory, a musical theatre lecturer from the University of Wolverhampton remarked that nine hours of training per day resulted in conservatoire students being markedly more talented than university students (Anon, *We Said We Wouldn't Look Back: British Musical Theatre Research and Practice*, University of Winchester, 21 May 2016). Furthering this, she stated: "students are infinitely more creative at universities with new writing than they are at conservatories" (ibid.). Unpacking this comment enables important questions to be raised regarding the aims of vocational and academic musical theatre courses and, importantly, about how creativity is defined in relation to the musical theatre performer's practice.

In the example above–in addition to the notion of creativity being introduced–the recurring themes of stigmatisation and separation are also clearly at work. Reinforcing a thorny and, I suggest, unnecessary binary between the academy and the conservatoire, both university and conservatoire students might be recognised as being discriminated against: the university student in terms of her talent and the conservatoire trainee in relation to her creative abilities. Although somewhat ambiguous, the lecturer's second comment regarding creativity and new writing seems to suggest either that the university student's creative work when engaging with new writing is superior to that of the conservatoire student, or that universities engage with new writing whilst

conservatories do not[1]. Both interpretations of the lecturer's opinion point towards the fact that the concept of creativity, in relation to musical theatre training, has received very little scholarly attention. It is this relationship which forms the focus of this chapter.

Addressing how creativity is located within the musical theatre training at ArtsEd, this chapter is divided into three parts. First, I provide an overview of recent creativity studies, outlining some of the epistemological challenges which can be understood to have prevented a perspicuous understanding of the construct. Secondly, I assess the definition and use of the term 'creative' in the theatre. The rise of the megamusical secured the current use of the term 'creative' in the theatre. The megamusical machine catalysed specific working methodologies for the performer, and I highlight the processes that can be recognised to inform certain expectations and assumptions about her practice. Finally, exploring creativity within the ArtsEd training context, I examine how the aforementioned methodologies can be understood to affect the training process. A critical discussion of the findings from the ArtsEd case study follows. Examining key principles within the pedagogies at ArtsEd, I consider how training itself can be recognised as a collaborative creative process, and uncover ArtsEd's methods to support and develop the creative processes of the musical theatre trainee. With this approach I hope to address the claim regarding the (apparent) lack of creativity of conservatoire students. Drawing vital connections between ArtsEd musical theatre pedagogies, the staff-student relationship, student development and the training environment, I consider how these various modes of creativity might impact the correlative loop between performer, training and industry.

Defining creativity: theoretical challenges

Since the turn of the 21st-century, creativity has become a central function within the structures of contemporary society. As Mark Batey and Adrian Furnham report: "the cultural value placed on creativity in the arts, sciences, technology, and political endeavors is immense" (2006, p.355). And yet, for many years, scholars have grappled to find a clear definition of the concept. Tracing modern creativity research, social psychologist R. Keith Sawyer describes three major waves of research: in the 1950s and 1960s, studies of the *personalities* of extraordinary creators; in the 1970s and 1980s, the *cognitive approach*; and in the 1980s and 1990s, the *sociocultural approach* (2012: p.4, italics in original). He asserts that a lack of interaction between these waves has limited the

[1] The latter interpretation can be proved innacurate: ArtsEd, for example, has commissioned a significant number of New Writing premieres.

possibility of a clear explanation of creativity, arguing that this can be enabled through an "*interdisciplinary approach*" (ibid: p.4, italics in original). This inclusive approach reflects the highly polysemous term which, as Harriet Hawkins (2017) points out, is

> fractured in its diversity and riven with tensions. It is also full of promise, variously understood as the saviour of the economy, as a toolbox of neoliberal politics and part of the diplomatic arsenal of state-craft practices as a psychological trait and philosophical concept. It is also an embodied, material and social practice that produces both highly specialist cultural goods and is a part of everyday life, and it offers myriad possibilities for making alternative worlds. (p.1)

The ubiquitous nature of the term and its breadth of meanings makes it problematic for some: "an anything goes term that applies to everything and so nothing" (ibid.: p.1-2). Interestingly, this description is tantamount to the problematic ambiguities of the 'triple threat', discussed in Chapter One. Carly J. Lassig states that the concept's nebulosity can be linked to "traditional beliefs of creativity having spiritual and mystical origins" (2013: p3). This view is supported by Robert Sternberg and Todd Lubart who assert that the study of creativity has not only been tinged but also tainted by its links to the mystical (1999: p4). And yet, despite its reported genericisation, creativity continues to be avidly studied and, over the last decade, the interdisciplinary approach championed by Sawyer (2012) has resulted in illuminating scholarship to augment our developing understanding of creativity. Aiming to produce a scientific explanation for creativity, Sawyer (2012) creates a convincing and comprehensive argument. Demonstrating the necessity of looking beyond the Western cultural model of creativity– which defines creativity as an individualist phenomenon marked by novelty–Sawyer identifies a necessarily shifting phenomenon through which diverse forms of creative emergence can be celebrated (2012). In the third section of this chapter, I consider creative processes in musical theatre training, drawing on themes developed through the ArtsEd case study. Sawyer's divergent thesis informs this component, alongside Graham Wallas' foundational model of the process, a selection of augmented versions of Wallas' framework, and theories of creativity from the fields of education and theatre and performance studies. Prior to this, it is necessary to consider the term 'creative', thinking about its definition and application in the theatre industry and how this might be understood to have impacted our interpretations of the musical theatre performer.

The 'creative' in the theatre

The 'creative' is frequently associated with arts disciplines; the creative arts feed into creative industries, and an assumption of creativity is projected onto those who work within these fields. Artists develop and maintain their creative practices and undertake creative processes. Despite this, in the theatre industry, the term 'creative' is often employed to describe the producer(s), director, musical director, designers (lighting, sound, scenic, costume, hair, wigs, make-up)[2], and additionally, in musical theatre, the choreographer, composer, lyricist, and book writer. Performers are not included in this group; instead, they are placed in a separate group and labelled as the 'cast'. This binary is reinforced in theatre programmes and production websites that list and separate 'cast' and 'creatives'. Suggesting that the appellation is gravely problematic due to "the insidious hierarchy of creativity" implied within, McAuley chooses instead to use the phrase "design team" in her account of rehearsal practice (2012: p.45). Reflecting on the origin of the 'creative' tag, McAuley notes (2012):

> It was probably adopted into theatre practice under the influence of the mega musicals of the 1980s, where the whole production was imported and the design had to be identical to the original in every respect. In these musicals, the performers were the only local factor and in a sense secondary to the designers. (p.45)

Turning to the megamusical allows some important questions to be raised regarding a performer's autonomy, agency, the specificity of their craft, and about the commodification and homogenisation of the musical theatre performer. The concept has been examined by a number of scholars, including Laura MacDonald (2015), Millie Taylor and Dominic Symonds (2014), Stacy Wolf (2011), Vagelis Siropoulos (2011, 2010), Charles Lee (2008), Susan Russell (2007), Dan Rebellato (2006), Jessica Sternfield (2006) and Jonathan Burston (1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2009).

To take a specific example, Russell's shrewd account–in which she draws on her own experience as a performer in the Broadway production of *The Phantom of the Opera*–underlines compulsory key features of the megamusical such as replicability and transnationality. These characteristics, Russell argues, have necessitated the development of a performance methodology "put in place to control a live actor" (2007: p.100). Using this system, those who manage the show go to great lengths to ensure the Broadway production and all other productions of *Phantom* worldwide are as close a reproduction of the 1988 original West End production as is possible. Securing this

[2] This is not an exhaustive list: flight director, flying director, illusions and other kinds of designer might be included here.

particular procedure, Cameron Mackintosh "changed the perception of liveness in his production by altering time" (Russell, 2007: p.100). This system can be found in all corporate Broadway productions (ibid.) and these methods are arguably also in use in the UK. It is the success of the original British productions conceived and produced by British impresarios Cameron Mackintosh and Andrew Lloyd Webber that acted as a catalyst for the globalised megamusical (Burston, 2009: p.165): until the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, *The Phantom of the Opera* had been running since 1986 and *Les Misérables* since 1985.

Russell explains that in becoming part of this process of "checks and balances" conducted by management, actors must sacrifice their individuality in and of the present to simulate the past (2007: p.99-100). Russell's conceptualisation of the megamusical performer as a "corporate actor" (2007: p.103) is generative for grasping how the practitioner's creativity might be stunted and, consequently, how assumptions about the musical theatre performer's practice might have been formed. Russell's theory is bolstered by Wolf's description of the scenographic elements of the megamusical and how these perform (2011):

> Megamusicals' visual spectacle and special effects transformed, or rather, dwarfed, the human body on stage. Drawing the audience's eye away from actors' bodies and the labor of performance and toward fog, flashing lights, and smoothly moving set that assembled, disassembled, and reassembled in full view, the set itself became a performer. (p.139)

This diminution of the human body on the stage significantly affects the performer (Wolf, 2011). Burston (2009) discusses the "interpretive delimitations" inflicted on the performer as a result of megamusical methods of reproduction (p.165), and Taylor and Symonds suggest that the process can "alienate [performers] from creativity" (2014: p.106). However, it is MacDonald's (2015) article, in which she considers how long-running musicals are successfully maintained, that is especially useful to this analysis.

MacDonald's work concentrates on how directors and choreographers support long-playing productions, but includes a consideration of the practice of the performer cast in a megamusical. Drawing on interviews with resident directors of West End and European long-running musicals, Macdonald provides important insights into the specificities of the director's role when working on such productions and, in doing so, she challenges some of the earlier scholarship addressing the impact of the megamusical. At this point I will briefly expand upon some of

Macdonald's findings, and later in this chapter return to examine MacDonald's analysis of the role of the director of long-running productions.

Whilst Burston (2009) and Russell (2007) support their explanations of the megamusical methodology with assertions made by performers (and, in Russell's case, her own firsthand experience), Wolf states: "Generations later, actors have no knowledge of the original purpose of or motivation for blocking choices, pieces of stage business, or singing style" (2013: p.158). Countering this, MacDonald unpacks the resident director's role: "More than traffic-directing the umpteenth cast through blocking and cues, the resident or associate director must connect the latest performers to the impulses and intentions that first developed a given musical" (2015: p.43). Considering the role of the megamusical performer, MacDonald references British actor Henry Goodman's experience of being fired after just four weeks of performances as Max Bialystock in *The Producers* on Broadway. This example, MacDonald suggests, aligns with Russell's experience of the requirement to replicate an original performance: the producers, Goodman suggests, "simply wanted a clone of Lane" (MacDonald, 2015: p.45). Conversely, MacDonald mentions performers who describe taking over a role that requires them to work within a set structure (in response to automated sound and lighting cues) but allows them the capacity to develop their own characters (ibid.). The latter description is consistent with the findings of a research interview I conducted with ArtsEd graduate and former *Les Misérables* cast member, Lucy Garrioch.

Garrioch joined the London cast in 2010 playing Madame and cover Factory Girl and, a year later, was offered the role of Factory Girl, covering Madame Thénardier, which she played until leaving the production in 2012. Reflecting on the *Les Misérables* rehearsal process, she describes a building block approach in which the cast learned the music and then took part in revolve workshops, before being set in each number. Garrioch explains: "It was all very thorough…I think they're quite particular about that" (2020, pers. comm. 15 November). She asserts that this attention to detail was even greater at the time when she joined the cast, due to this being the year of the musical's 25th anniversary, celebrated with a concert version of the musical being performed and filmed at London's O2 Arena. Garrioch notes that the company worked with John Caird, who directed the original production alongside Trevor Nunn, and Kate Flatt, who developed the original musical staging, for a full, five-week rehearsal period[3] (ibid.). There was also a strong emphasis on character work: playing a revolutionary woman on the barricade,

[3] The average West End rehearsal period is a maximum of four weeks, prior to moving into technical rehearsals.

Garrioch recalls developing the character of a lesbian poet, as well as creating a lice-ridden bag lady (2020, pers. comm. 15 November). Although the staging process ensured that performers were 'on their marks', it was equally focused on being true to character and necessitated the performer to interpret and be clear as to their character's motivation.

Whilst, to an extent, Garrioch's experience reinforces Russell's depiction of the megamusical as a reproducible, distributable "fluid product" (2007: p.99), and the presence of the original production team might be understood as an effort to ensure an accurate (as possible) replication of the 1985 London production, Garrioch's description of her experience suggests that to be a performer rehearsed into a musical with a production run of twenty-five years is not without creative interpretation (on the part of the artist). Responding to Rebellato (2006) and Burston's (2009) assertions regarding the compromised role of the director employed to work on long-running productions, Macdonald claims: "Suggesting directors of new companies of long-running musicals are not using their skills unfairly reduces the talent, labor and experience of many of the diverse directors who maintain hit musicals year after year" (2015: p.43) What then, I ask, about performers? Is their talent, labour and experience also diminished through a lack of understanding and recognition of their practice? If, on graduating, triple threat performers are expected to be prepared to fulfil the diverse requirements of the industry – on the one hand, becoming "cogs in the wheel" of the megamusical machine (Taylor and Symonds, 2014, p.107) – how does training address this creative spectrum? In response to these questions I turn to the training at ArtsEd.

Creative processes in musical theatre training

In this section I use findings from the ArtsEd case study to establish some of the different ways in which creativity and the development of creativity can be understood to be working within the school's musical theatre training. I will explore two perspectives of the creative process: in the first part, I present a mini case-study focusing on the dance department to think about how staff and students are working collaboratively to support the development of the triple threat performer. In the second part, I investigate the term 'creative process' vis-à-vis its use within the context of theatre, asking how this definition translates to the training process at ArtsEd. Investigating these modes through which dimensions of creativity are addressed provides a new understanding of the training ideologies at ArtsEd and how these are transmitted through pedagogy.

Graham Wallas' four-stage model of the creative process

Graham Wallas' (1926) model of the creative process provides a fruitful theoretical structure through which to explore how the dance pedagogies at ArtsEd can be understood to function as a creative process. The four-stage framework (see Figure 2), comprising "Preparation, Incubation, Illumination (and its accompaniments, and Verification" (Wallas, 1926: p.10) is detailed in the fourth chapter of Wallas's book, *Art of Thought* (1926).

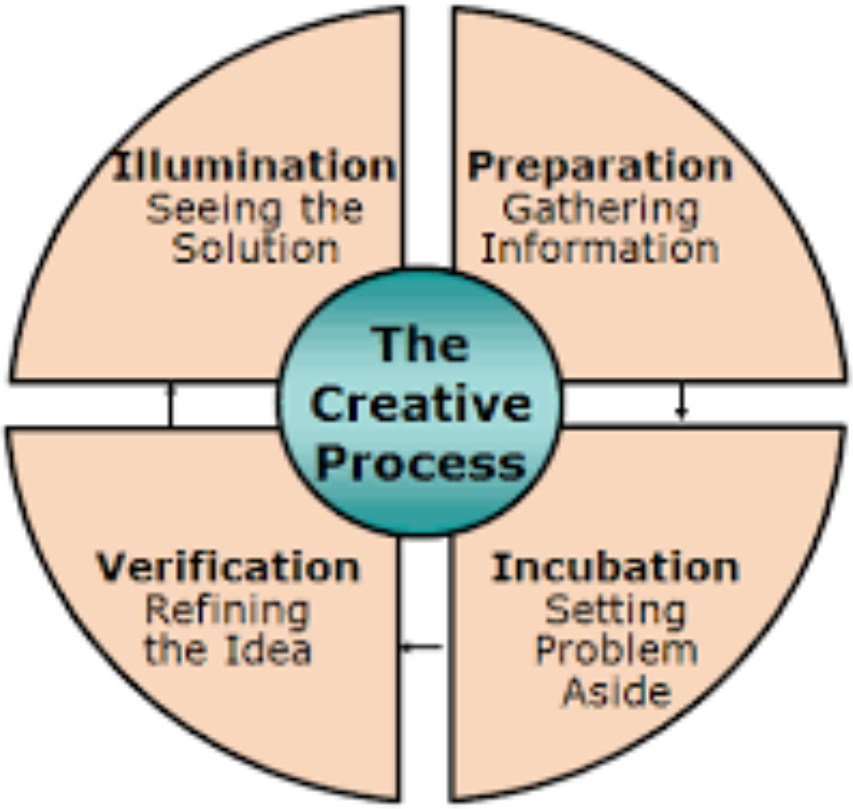


Figure 15 : Wallas' four-stage model of the creative process

Tracing the value of the framework, Eugene Sadler-Smith draws on the comments of Oshin Vartanian, Adam S. Bristol and James C. Kaufman (2013) and Mark Runco (2004) concerning the model's influence on a substantial number of research projects and its usefulness in scholarship over the years since its origination, respectively (2015: p.342). Wallas' model, Sadler-Smith points out, has acquired "the status of an in-house assumption among creativity researchers" (2015: p.342). A number of creativity scholars have further developed this prototype, including Sadler-Smith (2015), Sawyer (2012), Arthur J. Cropley and David J. Cropley (2005, 2012) and Charlotte L. Doyle (1998). Whilst Wallas' model has been in circulation for almost a century, no one revised model of the creative process has come to the fore as a superior

alternative: most of the revised frameworks continue to use Wallas' four stages, and a considerable amount of scholarship on creativity continues to make new connections using Wallas' process as a basis. Aligning the themes developed from the ArtsEd case study data with Wallas' model and with useful revisions of the model, too, allows fresh insights into the pedagogical approaches at the school and supports a nuanced understanding of the training process as one which is creative.

Dance pedagogies as collaborative creative process: creating the triple threat

To provide a little more context for this mini case-study, I outline the musical theatre course timetable before highlighting the significance of this chapter's emphasis on the dance pedagogies (as opposed to the acting or singing pedagogies) at ArtsEd. I then focus on David Greenall, the Head of Dance at ArtsEd.

ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre: course timetable

The timetable for an ArtsEd musical theatre student is tightly packed: classes are scheduled back-to-back between 8:30am and 6:00pm, Monday to Friday. Lunch breaks are between thirty minutes and one hour and fifteen minutes and 'free' periods are rare, usually occurring around timetabled one-to-one singing lessons once a week. In reality, the working day is considerably longer than scheduled as the vast majority of students arrive early to rehearse and, frequently, leave late for the same reason[4]. Due to the breadth of styles that students are required to master within their training – ballet, jazz, tap, contemporary, *pas de deux*, commercial, ballroom – dance dominates the curriculum.

A dance-dominant ideology

Whilst the ArtsEd musical theatre course design aims to provide an equal balance of acting, singing and dancing (Hocking, 2015), the notable effects of the dance pedagogies–steered by a number of formidable, long-serving staff members–results in the course appearing to promote a dance-dominant ideology. Interestingly, within training and industry circles, the course's historical reputation is associated with the production of musical theatre performers who are particularly highly-skilled dancers. Yet, over the last decade, significant changes to the acting curriculum and staffing along with the requirement for entry-level students to demonstrate a

[4] These rehearsals might be student-initiated with an individual student working alone, in a pair or small group, or a whole class rehearsal called by the student dance/music/speech captain for a particular project. Additional rehearsals are also formally called by teachers and production teams.

markedly higher standard of singing at audition than in previous years has resulted in the school producing increasingly high quality and, arguably, more employable, triple threat performers.

Introducing David

David Greenall is the Head of Dance on ArtsEd's BA (Hons) Musical Theatre programme and has taught at ArtsEd for sixteen years. He trained at Lewisham College, West Street Ballet School and The London School of Contemporary Dance. Whilst still training, David worked professionally with Matthew Bourne before being offered a job with Rambert Dance Company (which in 2013 became known, simply, as Rambert) by Richard Alston. Following this, he joined a ballet company in Europe, spending a number of years moving between the worlds of classical and contemporary dance. Choreography and teaching have been David's passions for many years and, although he speaks of a time when he felt conflicted and unable to decide between which passion to follow, his move to ArtsEd allowed him to pursue both pathways.

David describes meeting his promotion to Head of Dance for the School of Musical Theatre with some resistance: it is not a job that he has aspired to or searched out but a job that he has "made work" for himself, an evolving role that keeps him "always on [his] toes" (Greenall, interview, 17 June 2015). Since this appointment, David explains, his role focuses more on teaching. He suggests that one of the reasons for this shift relates to the school becoming more industry-orientated, resulting in an increasing number of outside professionals being invited to choreograph (direct, and musical direct) ArtsEd projects and productions.

David teaches a minimum of nine, 1.5-hour ballet classes a week: six first year male ballet classes; three second year mixed-sex ballet classes; and, in addition, he co-teaches three, hour- long second year *pas de deux* classes and choreographs a first year dance project, for which the teaching time is two full afternoons a week. This heavy teaching schedule means that I spend a significant amount of time observing David's classes. He is passionate about teaching and education, making clear that the aim of his job is not to prepare students for the industry, but to prepare them for life. Not only is this passion transmitted through his teaching, but it is a quality David emanates consistently. This personality trait is one element contributing towards David's significant presence and status in the ArtsEd community: here, I aim to unpack David's influential role in relation to his teaching. Examining the structure and content of the dance pedagogies at ArtsEd I argue that training itself can be interpreted as a creative process, that is, in its creation of the triple threat performer.

Preparation: problem-finding and problem-solving

When embarking on the musical theatre course at ArtsEd, students are streamed according to their dance ability. The process mimics an audition, with trainees performing a variety of technical exercises in front of a panel of the ArtsEd dance staff, following which the year group is grouped accordingly into three, mixed gender classes: 1.1; 1.2; and 1.3. Students remain in these divisions for the majority of their first-year classes: ballet; jazz; commercial (dance); acting; voice; physical theatre; ensemble (singing); contextual studies; song and dance; and project classes. The cohort is split into different groups again in relation to their existing tap ability and, due to timetabling, this means that the students take tap and contemporary dance classes and song workshops in these sets. For ballet classes in the first year, men and women are separated, but the women of 1.1 and 1.2 join together to take class, as do the men of 1.1 and 1.2, and the men and women in 1.3 have their own, single-sex classes. I propose that it is in the first year of training that the 'preparation' stage of the creative process can be revealed. Wallas himself makes clear that his focus for the chapter in which he details his model of the creative process does not centre on the preparation phase (1926: p.82), therefore, it is helpful here to draw on the work of other creativity scholars to think about the components of this stage.

An important step within the preparation stage is 'problem-finding'. Whilst this term, along with the term 'problem-solving', is not used until 1965 by Norman H. Mackworth, many creativity scholars now understand it to be a fundamental element of the creative process (Sawyer, 2012: p.91). Defining a problem, Runco describes "a situation with a goal and an obstacle" (2007: p.14). What, then, are the 'obstacles' that surface at ArtsEd and how are they addressed through the dance pedagogy? Finding problems is not an unusual feature within dance classes: one of the expectations of the teacher is that she or he is able to notice the problems experienced by students and give corrections to support their learning. These corrections are communicated verbally and physically. Dance scholar Rory Foster asserts: "We teach and our students learn via the cognitive and kinesthetic processes. Students cognize and process information visually through our demonstrations of steps and spatial relationships, and they hear through our verbal instruction…" (2010: p.2). Foster also points out that, in ballet classes, two types of corrections are given: general corrections and personal corrections (2010: p.2). Ballet is taught mainly through group learning, as opposed to in one-to-one lessons, and this produces

> an added challenge to any teacher as s/he offers general corrections throughout a class, because each student has his/her own system of cognitive and kinesthetic learning. Personal corrections are given as well, but the same correction given to two students may be effective for one but not for the other. It is, therefore, up to the

> teacher to ascertain or intuit how each student learns effectively. (Foster, 2010: ibid)

General and personal corrections are delivered in classes by all of the ArtsEd dance teachers. More specifically, in his first-year male ballet classes, David draws the students' awareness to the problems that he is witnessing. The data snippets below were recorded at the beginning of the fourth week of the first term of training:

> "There's so much wrong that you're doing, we've only got a year." (David)
>
> "There are so many problems here, but if we can get them sorted…" (David)
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], 1.1 and 1.2 Ballet class, October 2014)

David makes clear that issues are present and noticeable in the students' practice. Although the notion of problems is explicitly mentioned, his statements do not detail distinctive issues and are directed to the class as a collective body. Thinking about the problem-solving process, Alex F. Osborn suggested "that one of the hallmarks of the creative process is deferred judgment because early evaluation can kill new ideas that need time to develop and be elaborated. Thus the creative process may be characterized by avoiding evaluation early in the problem-solving process…" (Osborn in Lubart, 2001: p.302). David's approach, then, can be recognised as one which encourages the students to be self-reflective and consider what their own individual issues might be. Using the plural 'we', David refers to himself and to the students, signalling that this process of problem-finding and problem-solving is collaborative. Implicit in the second utterance is a compliment, as David signals the potential of the students. In the same class, David continues to allude to obstacles without pinpointing the nub of the problems:

> "I'll try not to look at your arms, because all I do is get upset." (David)
>
> "Did we do both sides? I don't know, I had my eyes closed for some of it. I mean, I can't watch all of it…" (David)
>
> "Ohhhh, my gosh." (David)
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], 1.1 and 1.2 Ballet class, October 2014)

Personal affect, emotion and humour are evidenced in the above comments as David suggests that a proliferation of problems are present. The third data fragment documents a colloquial expression used by David in all of his classes. Whilst students come to recognise and be amused by this frequently used phrase, it is an expression that is marked with serious overtones regarding

the connotations of the setbacks that David witnesses. Although a large part of training centres on technique, the language used by David during this early phase of training is not loaded with technical jargon. Whilst students are expected to learn the French names for the ballet steps, the main purpose of this is to aid their comprehension of the action of a step. Instead, a heavier emphasis is placed on "finding understanding" (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], 6th October 2014).

Evaluation features in the quick and clear diagnosis of individual problems in dance classes at ArtsEd. Problems such as the one detailed below can be targeted with a relatively straightforward solution:

> A student is working through his feet[5] at the end of an exercise. David expects him to 'finish'. A few minutes later, the same student asks a question. (*Inaudible*). David: "Say it clearly." The student explains that he is rolling onto his big toe and asks David why he is doing this and how he can prevent it happening. David diagnoses weak ankles: "That's weakness." He goes on to demonstrate an exercise that the student needs to do to strengthen his ankles.'
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October 2014)

Other issues take longer to be understood and are determined by staff over a period of time as they observe the student working. It is common for issues to be noticed by more than one staff member: the sign of a united objective within problem-finding.

> Karen as she corrects Chantelle: "You really need to work on this. You've got terrible posture here."
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, 1.3 Jazz class, October 2014)

> Sandra works with Chantelle (focusing on the same area that Karen addressed in Jazz earlier today). Chantelle tells Sandra what Karen has said about her posture in Jazz. Sandra: "I'm glad we're all saying the same thing." Sandra investigates the problem further, asking Chantelle to lie on the floor before addressing the whole class about individual postures. Sandra to Chantelle: "If in doubt, stop, sort it, and continue...for today."
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, 1.3 Ballet class, October 2014)

Examples such as one above highlight the need for larger problems to be articulated and

[5] An exercise in which the practitioner rolls through each part of the foot, alternating feet, lifting and replacing the heel whilst keeping the ball of the foot in contact with the floor. This is often carried out as a warm up exercise.

addressed relatively quickly. This allows the student to be aware of a shortcoming and for both teacher and student to develop strategies to overcome the difficulty. If uncorrected, the effects of physical misalignment can be detrimental to progression in training. The challenge for Chantelle to relearn this new, corrected posturing is clear. It is a struggle which is manifested in her frustrated facial expressions and bodily contortions in a battle to make the uncomfortable and strange feel and look normal; she describes this foreign but accurate position as one that makes her feel like she is "falling over" (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, 1.3 Ballet class, October 2013).

Some trainees arrive at the school with natural facility but no former dance training and, therefore, little understanding of technique. At ArtsEd, a higher proportion of women have undertaken formal dance training prior to starting the degree course. There are exceptions to this but, often, male students will encounter their first dance class on arrival at the school. To train students who have little or no experience of formal dance training to a professional level at which they are able to demonstrate equal (and, sometimes, even superior) skill to their peers who may well have been training for fifteen years before attending ArtsEd is a remarkable undertaking. An additional challenge lies in undoing the bad habits that some students develop prior to coming to ArtsEd: these are often the result of poor teaching.

In the staff interviews (2015), the significantly wide range of physical facility displayed by musical theatre students at ArtsEd surfaces as the key challenge for dance staff. All three disciplines hold equal importance within the training at ArtsEd, therefore, it is impossible to rule out a performer with considerable potential due to characteristics such as a lack of flexibility, a long torso and short legs, and other corporeal idiosyncrasies that may not be acceptable for dancers looking to train solely in dance. Senior Jazz Tutor, Jill-Louise Hydes, explains:

> Because of the bodies that are chosen for musical theatre, we don't necessarily have the physical body, whether that's because they haven't trained prior to coming here, or, because they've got restrictions in their bodies, and therefore I have to work with those physical bodies which is sometimes rather difficult, as well as people that have been training since they were young and don't have restrictions in their bodies. So, because the groups are all in together, we don't put them in levels in the third year; that's probably one of the most difficult parts of my teaching, is that training on those different bodies; whereas if I was to teach in isolation at another school, and the school was concentrating on dancers … they would be chosen for their bodies. …[W]e do have lots of people that are excellent singers, excellent actresses or actors, and don't necessarily have the physique to be able to cope with the dance training.
>
> (Jill, ArtsEd Case Study, Personal Interview, July 2015)

Jill's description highlights two important challenges which connect with training as a creative process. The first relates to the diverse range of bodies being trained and how this can be considered to complicate the problem-finding and problem-solving phases of the training process. The second signals a need for pedagogical approaches which respond to the specificities brought about by interdisciplinary nature of musical theatre. Both of these aspects are addressed in an interview with Chris Hocking (2015).

Hocking began working at ArtsEd in 1999 and, whilst at the institution, he has held the positions of Jazz Tutor, Head of Dance, Co-Director of Musical Theatre, Director of Musical Theatre, Deputy Principal and Director of the Schools of Musical Theatre and Acting, before being appointed as Principal and Director of the School of Musical Theatre at ArtsEd in 2017. He continued to teach Jazz to second year students until 2017. Reflecting on his jazz teaching practice, Chris asserts: "If I was teaching jazz to dancers, first of all I would probably have a different set of people in the room" (Chris, ArtsEd Case Study, Personal Interview, July 2015). He describes a curriculum that has evolved as he has adapted his methods to create a second year Jazz syllabus that works effectively for both those with limited facility and those who are very flexible. Chris's comments reinforce Jill's emphasis on the need for the dance teacher to respond creatively within his or her own pedagogical practice to develop a system of learning that supports the varied abilities of the musical theatre students. I will return to further discuss this aspect a little later in this chapter.

Across the dance, acting and singing pedagogies, two key themes were identified and developed from the data: these relate to the conceptualisation of training as a creative process and punctuate the preparation stage at ArtsEd. The first is "the development of trustworthy technique": that is, a solid technique that the student is able to trust and, also, that aims to enable the ArtsEd graduate's technique to be trusted by her future employers. The second theme, "incorporating 'the seven standards'", focuses on the trainee learning and applying a set of domain-specific, cross-disciplinary skills. Evidence indicates that, alongside the development of technique, 'the seven standards' are skills that are established in the first and early in the second year of training to shape certain, ongoing patterns of behaviour. I will consider each of these briefly in turn, providing evidence from the field before discussing these tenets in relation to training as a creative process.

The seven standards:

Discipline

Discipline is a non-negotiable requirement of training and industry alike and ArtsEd students are constantly reminded its importance. Discipline is displayed through a wide range of factors including those that are physical (commitment to fitness, stamina, technique, diet) and behavioural (attitude, focus, body language, class/theatre etiquette). Students must learn the rules of the course, of the industry and of particular teachers and their classes. The requirement for trainees to adapt to different teachers' ideologies is demonstrated below: frequently, the principles of the teachers cross over but, the student is expected to respond to the nuances of each staff member's approach:

> Sandra to Charlotte: "Right, that's four times you've said sorry to me this class...how many times is it going to be? I'm not objecting to you apologising, I'm objecting to *how many times* you're apologising." Charlotte: "Sorry". The class disperses into giggles.
>
> Student apologises as he is corrected, Karen: "Never say sorry."
>
> Jill to Danny: "It's okay. Don't say sorry to me. It's brilliant that you've found that mistake, now don't make it."
>
> When Alex has finished the read, he says: "Sorry about that." Lisa: "What did you do?" "I got the lines the wrong way round." Lisa: "Sssssh! I didn't even notice! Don't tell me that! Well covered up."
>
> David: "Well, don't say sorry - just do them right!" Male student: "I will!"
>
> Female student: "Sorry." Charlie: "Don't apologise."
>
> "Don't say sorry straight away. 'Cos I'm telling you. It doesn't matter." (Jill)
>
> Sandra as Sienna finishes pirouette exercise in fifth position: "Attitude...Sienna!" She corrects herself: "Sorry!" Sandra: "You did that last week!"
>
> Bobby, on receiving a correction from Jill: "Sorry." Jill: "That's alright."
>
> At the end of the warm-up jumps exercise, Heather to male student: "You fucked that up royally." Male student: "I know, sorry." Heather: "That's okay, just go over it."
>
> Two students, Mark and Teddy, have danced the arms exercise incorrectly. Just the two of them are asked to do the exercise. They both go wrong. Chris asks them do then do the exercise one at a time, so that they do not distract each other. They do the exercise again. Chris: "I'm really sorry, I have to ask both of you to go, 'cos that was the exercise." Mark and Teddy quietly leave the studio.

(ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October and November 2014/May, June and July 2015)

Considering the act of apologising is particularly interesting when it is related to the problem-finding and problem-solving phases of the creative process. Students' apologies receive various responses from staff members. Some object wholly to verbal apologies, others simply accept them. In the third data snippet (see above), the student is praised for finding "that mistake", before the onus being placed on him to solve the issue. Runco asserts that, for creative work, problem discovery is a vital skill that should be incorporated into the curriculum (2004: p.193-194). In the final example, the two students' display of a lack of self-discipline–manifested in their inability to perform an exercise as choreographed–results in them being disciplined by the teacher. In this case and, in the context of the training environment, the stakes are high as the students are asked to leave the class. This imitates industry practice, that is, being cut from auditions due to a poor performance. In Chapter 4, I consider the high stakes nature of training in more detail.

Listening

The expectation placed on the students to listen to what is being communicated is consistently reinforced in classes, in the form of direct statements. Whilst it is usually the teacher's voice that dominates in the studio, it is important to recognise that the students are directed to listen to the teacher at all times, regardless of whether they are speaking to another student, the student as an individual, or to the whole class. In her study on the discipline of 'active' listening, Robertson uses Knights' definition of 'free attention', an essential characteristic of the active listener who must place "all on one's attention and awareness at the disposal of another person, listening with interest and appreciating without interruption" (Knights in Robertson, 2005: p.1053). It could be said that the musical theatre training environment is one which is ideal for the practice of active listening, as students are not necessarily required to offer a verbal response or, when they are, this is very clearly signalled. Continuing to draw on Knights' work, Robertson clarifies: "While the listener does not introduce their own views or solutions, they are far from passive. Instead they draw on high level skills in allowing the speaker to reflect: listening and exploring, understanding and relating, and focussing and assisting" (ibid.). At ArtsEd, the response of the listener is shown physically through their practice. To be engaged and responsive to the skill of active listening all of the time is a demanding task for students. The observation periods underpin this claim:

Fuck up, take risks, fall over, but *listen*." (David)

"Listen - because sometimes you expect and you don't get what you expect." (Sandra)

"Concentrating? This note could affect you, so you've got to listen at all times." (Jodie)

David to student: "Why did you turn your shoulders to the audience?" Student: "'Cos I'm shit?" David: No! Not 'cos you're shit, 'cos you're not *listening*."

"You're not listening. The biggest aid to your learning...is your ears!" (David)

"You guys are terrible at listening." (Jodie)

Students are in pairs, with one listener and one speaker. Kat: "This act of receiving is as important as the act of speaking."

Tom, shouting: "Why am I talking when no-one's listening? Can you listen, please?"

"You need to listen to the words I say not the body that does not do it anymore." (Jill)

"Listen attentively to everything I say and your lives will be transformed, I tell you." (Simon)
"So your job if you're not speaking is to listen, which should be encouraged at all times. So you need to be active listening..." (Simon)

(ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October and November 2014/May, June and July 2015)

Rogers and Farson identify active listening as a tool to address everyday problems (1979). However, although this skill may be an aid to problem-solving, the process is stifled if the student is unable, either consciously or subconsciously, to rid herself of her own worries, anxieties and prejudices, and these become barriers to learning. As the ability to listen actively is promoted as a compulsory and valuable skill in the training at ArtsEd, introducing a method to support students to better understand and develop this ability would be felicitous[6].

[6] Looking to the musical theatre programme at Sheridan College, Canada, and their highly effective use of Anne Bogart and Tina Landau's Viewpoints and Composition would be useful. Observing Sheridan's musical theatre students partaking in a Viewpoints and Composition class (*Song, Stage and Screen IX: 'The Art of Collaboration in Musical Theatre',* Sheridan College, Canada, 25 June 2014), facilitated by Marc Richard, illustrated the movement-driven practice as a form that would complement ArtsEd's musical theatre training. I propose that the form's emphasis on mindfulness, observation, imagery and collaboration could support the development of the triple threat trainee's listening skills and enhance her wider practice.

Responsibility

The heavy emphasis on students on the ArtsEd Musical Theatre course taking responsibility for their training is significant, and is clearly evident in both the *Discipline* and the *Listening* sections above. Evidence indicates that this tenet provokes an important learning curve for the trainee, as she is influenced and encouraged to take ownership of her own learning and continued development, in doing so shaping her identity and reputation as a performer.

> "Who is responsible for your education, you or me? You. You are absolutely responsible for your education." (David)
>
> "You're frustrating the hell out of me 'cos you can hear me giving the notes but you're not taking them on. You've got to take responsibility for your own learning... ...We did a load of work on this, but you don't take the work from one lesson to the next, so you forgot." (Jill)
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October 2014/June 2015)

This exchange becomes a passing over of responsibility, from teacher to student, and the student is expected to work on defects outside class time. This reflects industry practice, in which performers are expected to take on and apply notes immediately: once the note has been given by the resident director, musical director, or dance captain, there is an expectation that the note will not have to be repeated.

Teamwork

The musical theatre performer is often considered to be an exclusive package: an individual in competition with other individuals to secure performance work. At ArtsEd, the class groups develop a tightly-knit bond, becoming a support network through their shared experience. Classes are frequently referred to as a team and an ensemble by staff members and a group power of sorts becomes evident via the class' collective identity.

> At the end of the *ballonné* exercise, David turns his head to first year student, Daniel. He gestures with his hand as he says emphatically: "You've nailed it. You've *nailed* it!" Immediately, three of Daniel's classmates respond with animated 'spirit fingers'.
>
> All but one of the first and second year class groups have developed group names and each has created a punchy, choral mantra which they perform together at the end of each dance class. (First year, Daniel, tells me that 1.2. "never really stuck with anything".) These include : '1.1 bulls'; '1.3 army'; '2.1 swans'; '2.2 spartans'; and '2.3 scorpions'.
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October 2014)

Timekeeping

The concept of time is a dominant feature in the day-to-day training at ArtsEd. Punctuality is important and student attendance at every scheduled class, Monday to Friday, is compulsory. Students must sign in every morning in the foyer area; this involves a handwritten signature on a sign-in sheet that is supervised by a staff member. On beginning at the school, each trainee is issued with a lanyard encasing a student card, which is used to gain access to the building and a record as to who is entering and when. If students are late and have not signed in by 8:45am, they are barred for the day, meaning that they must leave the building and miss a day of training. The school operates a 'three strike' rule; if students are barred three times then they are asked to leave the course. The third-year students have a slightly altered arrangement as they spend a large proportion of their time in show rehearsals and performance. This allows, at certain times in the year, an adjusted timetable to accommodate occurrences such as technical and dress rehearsals, *sitzproben*, company classes, clean up calls and, when permitted, auditions for professional productions. When in periods of production at ArtsEd, the third years are often called at times that honour Equity guidelines, signalling the students' shifting identities as they prepare to graduate.

Failure to be on time for classes on the musical theatre course is a serious matter. If students are late for a class, teachers are obliged to impose the lateness rule and refuse the student entry into the studio:

> The studio door opens. Rory as he enters: "Sorry I was going by the clock in the canteen which might be a few minutes...". Kat: "I'm sorry, Rory, I can't let you in." He signals his understanding with a brief nod and closes the door. (He is barred from the class.) Kat signals her own frustration and disappointment at having to ban him: "Oh…damn!" (Kat)
>
> You're late! You *must* tell Cerys [a singing teacher] to let you out on time." (Jill)
>
> Two first year student, Emma and Sadie, are latecomers to the class. Sandra turns quickly to them: "You're late!" Emma and Sadie begin to explain but, before they are able to give a reason, Sandra interrupts, sternly: "I know, I know…but you're *late.*" An emphatic pause follows – and then she admits the students into class.
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study, [field notes], Diamond, October and November 2014/May, June and July 2015)

Trust

In a school setting, trust can be considered "in relation to a variety of reference groups – students, teachers, administrators, the organization. One trusts others, not to simply be consistent in action, but also to act according to one's best interest" (Hoffman et al. 1994: 486). This idea can be traced at ArtsEd as the musical theatre students are encouraged to trust their training and, therefore, themselves, and their teachers:

> "Trust yourself to find those words". (Andrew)
>
> "When you come into a rehearsal like this, you've got to trust what you're doing." (David)
>
> "We need to get there earlier. It's just trust. It's really lovely, you can do it, but we need to get there first take." (Merryn)
>
> "Now, I'm trusting you that you're automatically thinking when that leg goes to the back that you're lifting." (Jill)
>
> "There are a lot of students come in and they say, 'Right I'm gonna completely trust you. I'm gonna completely trust you.' You have to be a person that they will then not be disappointed in. And when you look at, at people and I can just point them out…they have come in and said, 'I'm gonna completely trust you…whatever you say'. And there's some, a few of them that haven't, a few of them that don't trust you." (David)
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October and November 2014/May, June and July 2015)

Rory Foster highlights some dance students' reluctance to take on particular corrections that require them to move differently: applying these notes can be challenging as they often take the student out of their comfort zone and feel foreign (2010: p.95). Trust is a complex matter: data suggests that, in the training at ArtsEd, students and teachers work to eradicate barriers that can prevent the student from trusting themselves and staff members. These obstacles are another example of problem-finding and problem-solving within the preparation phase of training.

Focus

The instruction requiring students to "focus" is issued often across the musical theatre curriculum:

> "Take charge of yourself. Give the best of yourself. Whatever else is going on inside your head....focus. Clean yourself up." (Gail)
>
> "The moment is now. It's not tomorrow, it's now. And you're going to enjoy that moment...'cos that's part of the process...part of your development." (Jill)

> "Your vital fire…your personal energy… is in the space - focused eyeline, strong centre, controlled stillness in the upper body, presence." (Gail)
>
> "You've got to maintain your focus even though your body's struggling." (Gail)
>
> Chris: "What is it that Luke's got when he's dancing?" "Focus." "Yep, focus, that's what's exciting- I don't want perfect technique. He's like...POW...absolute focus. It's about performance. Think about why you're dancing, about why you're here. To perform. Because you want to be performers."
>
> "I wouldn't do it if I didn't think you could do it...I believe in you. You've got to believe in yourselves... If I come up to talk to you, Matthew, and you stop what you're doing to listen, it means you're not focused." (David)
>
> Lewis has receded from his initial position in the front line of the class. Karen: "It's good being at the front, isn't it, Lewis?" Lewis: "I can't do it, I can't do it. I'm focusing on stuff that I shouldn't be focusing on." Karen brings him back to the front: "That's OK, that's OK. It's good practice, isn't it? 'Cos it's gonna happen one day. Do it for today, and we'll talk about how it feels after. You're supposed to be frightened this year." Lewis: "Yeah, OK."
>
> "You have to bring something of yourself, of your spirit, to the space. Then we'll want to watch it. Just going through the motions ain't gonna cut it." (Gail)
>
> "Start again, Jake. Don't look at me - it will really help if you focus." (Jill)
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October and November 2014/May, June and July 2015)

Like the term "centre", which is used in an abstract sense at ArtsEd–the trainee is often encouraged to "find" or "get on" her centre–the term "focus" is frequently used, but neither its specific meaning nor its application is discussed explicitly in or outside classes. However, I suggest that in scrutinising this act of focusing a deeper understanding of the nuances of ArtsEd's triple threat training programme are enabled, and will return to this in the next section. The standards detailed may appear unextraordinary: these are skills that any student might be expected to execute as she learns to do a difficult task. However, the pressing regularity and emphasis of these rules within the ArtsEd pedagogies and, resultantly, in the data, and the seriousness with which they are imbued by the ArtsEd staff marks the mastery of them as integral to the development of the triple threat performer and the creative process of training. In developing and/or refining a strong technique across the musical theatre disciplines by and embodying the seven standards, the student progresses through a pedagogical creative process as she aims to become a triple threat practitioner. This creative process, then, is about collaborative (student and staff) creation as the trainee's practice and identity evolves. This notion of collaboration is particularly important, reaching beyond the student-staff relationship to address, what Sawyer has called, "the creativity of the ensemble" (2012: p.365). I will address this term in

the next section, alongside an analysis of the last of the seven standards: focus. By detailing an institution-specific approach, I offer a crucial insight into how ArtsEd's identify and negotiate the sometimes limited and limiting boundaries put upon the musical theatre performer by the megamusical system, discussed earlier in this chapter.

Creating focus and flow in training

On one level, focus, in practice, at ArtsEd can be recognised as the student's unwavering concentration and complete commitment to the task at hand: channelling all of her energy directly into her practice and the moment of performance. The trainee's priority must be to achieve the objective of the exercise that she is undertaking at the given time. The examination of a theme identified in the data, however, highlights focus as an integral aspect of the ArtsEd training that addresses the performer in her capacity as a creator.

In second year Jazz classes, a particularly pertinent approach to focus is observed:

> Towards the end of the stretching exercise, the students stand with their feet in together in a parallel position, their arms at their sides, looking directly ahead, almost motionless. The music continues: this is part of the choreography. Shifting carefully from side to side, craning his neck very slightly as he surveys the trainees, Chris calls out, urgently: "Switch on! It's all in the eyes - don't switch off! Switch on! …Switch on! … Keep alive! Don't stare. Look alive! Don't switch off! Switch on! Switch on more, Charlotte! Switch on more, Teddy! Switch on more, Luke! Switch on, Joshua!" It is a prolonged moment in time and space, characterised by anticipation and intensity, a certain tension, an air of possibility.
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, June 2015)

What is the student thinking about when she is focusing? Is she concentrating solely on the exercise she is performing? Is she focusing on her future? What does it mean to "switch on" and how, specifically, is this focus manifested in the student's performance? At what point does the trainee reach her peak focus? Is the concept of focus linked here to the concept of presence? Exploring this intriguing moment, a link can be made between the megamusical performer and her balancing act (considered earlier in this chapter) between "'cinematized actor" (Russell, 2007:

p.102) and interpretive creator and, what can be considered as, a pedagogical strategy. It is useful to return at this point to MacDonald's consideration of long-running productions.

MacDonald draws on Philip Auslander's (2008) study of liveness and his assertion that audiences are seeking a different experience but of the same performance, and "the ostensible evanescence and nonrepeatability of the live experience ironically become selling points to promote a product that must be fundamentally the same in each of its instantiations" (Auslander in MacDonald, 2015: p.46). She credits the directors for the success of these long-running works, claiming that "it is the careful, sophisticated labor of the resident directors supporting these performers that continuously offers audiences an energized and engaging live experience of the same musical" (2015: p.46). While I am very aware, from personal experience, of the invaluableness of an insightful and committed resident director, musical theatre is a collaborative practice and MacDonald's conclusion fails to recognise the labour or skill of the performer.

The strategy used by Chris in his teaching of the second year Jazz class–a moment within the class choreography in which he urges them to "switch on!" as they stand (almost) still–can be understood to directly mirror the long-running production's framework. Just as the megamusical replicates many of its production elements–set, choreography, costume, staging–and the performer fits into the structure of the work, so the ArtsEd trainee in class is required to partake in the highly structured, tightly choreographed class, in the same studio, three times a week. But it is the specificity within this particular moment that further illustrates an important facet of the ArtsEd training. In analysing this focused moment in the ArtsEd Jazz class, I will continue to draw on Auslander's (2008) argument about liveness in order to highlight how ArtsEd pedagogies are addressing the triple threat's scope as a creator.

Discussing the particularities of a theatre production that might be considered as a "standardized product", Auslander (2008) argues against Noël Carroll's (1998) definition of "mass art". Carroll maintains that theatre and live performance does not meet two of his three criteria for the mass artwork, that is: 1) "x is a multiple instance or type artwork", and, 2) produced and distributed by a mass technology" (1998: p.196). Auslander, however, suggests that the concurrent staging of numerous productions of a work worldwide meets Carroll's first condition (2008: p.53). Auslander also disputes Carroll's claim that performances of live theatre can be distinguished from films as the latter "is generated directly from a template (a print of a film)" whilst "a theatrical performance is generated from an interpretation of the play text" (2008: ibid.). To

embody an interpretation, Carroll asserts, takes artistry and imagination (1998: p.213-214). Challenging this, Auslander proposes that the interpretation used across multiple productions of the almost identical play can be recognised to work as a template (2008):

> While the actors would have to possess a certain amount of craft and skill to replicate the performances established in the template (…), individual artistry and imagination would be negative qualities in such a performance, since they would tend to work against the success of [the production] as a standardized product. (pp.53-54)

Auslander, then, pulls against the performer as a creator. Not only this, but he also challenges a number of the positive qualities that are frequently linked with live performance: community; presence; spontaneity; and feedback between performers and audience (Auslander, 2008: p.63). This perspective can be aligned with Russell's depiction of the megamusical performer or the "corporate actor" (2007). And yet, to return to the ArtsEd Jazz class, it is clear that the performer is being asked to *create* something, something which goes beyond the precise execution of the material. While Auslander problematises how the experience of liveness is expressed, often in ways that are "intuitive, metaphorical and subjective" (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2015: p.73), he admits to recognising the value of these concepts along with a possible need for performers to believe in them (Auslander, 2015: pp.2-3). Augmenting Hocking's idiosyncratic approach to focus, I suggest that these moments of focus may also be understood to be mobilising a "flow state" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Connecting this condition with the performer, Sawyer notes how the presence of an audience can either raise or reduce the quality of a practioner's performance, depending on the ease of difficulty of the task a hand (2012: p.363). Using the theory of flow to explain, Sawyer asserts that the flow state occurs when the challenges of a task are equal in measure to the level of skill of the performer: it is the challenge of live performance sought out by the performer that enables this (2012: ibid). Furthermore, Sawyer points out that this flow state is also aspired to by the ensemble, who "attain their best performances by staying in a zone between complete predictability and being out of control" (2012: p.365). Whilst Sawyer suggests performers do not experience flow in rehearsals due to a lack of challenge, Chris's pressing comments and apparent insatiableness can be recognised to create the necessary challenge which the student needs to work towards achieving the flow state. The specificity of this moment reflects a need for trainees to be at their peak at all times: not only in the event of performance but in class, too. Reminiscent of the audition culture which characterises the industry, the moment highlights the notion of high stakes, to which I turn in Chapter 4.

This occurrence within the second year Jazz class can be understood to communicate an important aspect of ArtsEd's training ideology. In some ways the trainee produces paradoxical qualities which respond to and resist the limitations of the megamusical machine: bound by her choreographed stillness yet somehow moving; silent yet speaking with her eyes; confident and self-assured yet vulnerable; doing nothing and doing everything; working individually yet collectively. She is expected to conform to the boundaries of the choreography, but to connect beyond the material. It is a moment in which the student demonstrates conformity but also, perhaps, creativity in order to assert herself in the environment. Ronald A. Beghetto (2016) has suggested that the relationship between creativity and conformity is closer than we might have imagined. Pointing out that creativity is more than originality, Beghetto (2016) proposes that

> Creativity requires that the original expressions of thought and action conform to some criteria–be it usefulness, meaningfulness, value, or meets tasks constraints–in order for it to be considered creative. It can therefore be said that creativity requires conformity to help ensure that the new and original idea, behaviour, or action is meaningful for the task at hand. (p.269)

For the performer-in-training, the task constraints can be dictated by the institutional, cultural, disciplinary and artistic rules of the practice. However, by adhering to these constraints–her work being anchored by strong technique and the seven standards–the student is able to achieve focus and open up the possibility of flow in her practice: the latter, Sawyer (2012) argues, is closely connected to creativity. Where and indeed how, then, does Chapter 1's figure of the "maverick"' (Alexander in Kapsali, 2014: p.222) function when the ArtsEd musical theatre course's ideology necessitates conformity as both a demonstratable behaviour and a key requirement? To reflect on how this question may be answered, I draw attention to a theme developed from the data.

The behaviours of a small number of musical theatre students I observed resulted in a theme and a sub-theme being shaped and named, "documented dissonance" and "dancing around dissonance" – and these can be recognised to support the telling of "a *particular* story about the data" (Braun and Clarke, 2012: p.8) addressing my research question. During my first fieldwork residency at ArtsEd, the behaviour of three first year, female musical theatre students clearly stood out from that of their peers: all appeared to lack focus, particularly in dance classes, and their attitudes (although sometimes hidden from staff members) made them conspicuous as challengers of the training system. In June 2015, towards the end of my second fieldwork residency, I am informed by a staff member that one of these 'challengers' has left and, as an audience member of this year group's graduate shows in 2017, I note that another of the

aforementioned trio is no longer a student at the school. The behaviour of the third student becomes a talking point in an interview with a staff member towards the end of my second residency: the trainee's is framed as "a serious problem" and I am informed that she is "on a warning" (ArtsEd staff member, 17 June 2015). Less than a week later, I observe the student's end-of-year singing assessment. A panel of four examines her performance and an additional ten people happen to be in the room to observe these assessments. The student's electrifying interpretations of two songs through which she also demonstrates her seemingly flawless vocal technique, is met with enthusiastic, spontaneous applause from the panel and a number of the observers. Since graduating from the ArtsEd musical theatre course in 2017, this practitioner has been recognised within (and beyond) the industry as a prolific, triple threat performer. Using this performer, alongside the two aforementioned students, as an example, I argue that the requirement to wholly conform to discipline appears to allow some exceptions. A focused case study attending to 'the maverick trainee' could usefully explore how ArtsEd is addressing this significant matter.

Incubation: imagery as 'future-orientated encouragement'

The creative process at ArtsEd does not neatly fit the period of incubation as framed by creativity scholars. Lubart describes (2001):

> During incubation, there is no conscious mental work on the problem. A person may be working consciously on other problems or simply relaxing, taking a break from the problem. Unconsciously, however, the mind continues to work on the problem, forming trains of associations. (p.296)

In thinking about theatre processes, Bickerstaff observes that Dean and Carra (1989), in defining stages of the rehearsal process, omit the 'unconscious' phase in their analysis (Bickerstaff, 2011: 44). Whilst it may seem impossible to find a clear period of training in which ArtsEd students are not in a conscious, problem-solving mode, patterns in the collected data allow apposite conclusions to be drawn when training is compared to theories of the incubation stage. Lubart notes Amabile's (1996) assertion that incubation may occur during the creative process and may involve selective forgetting or changes in motivation" (2001: p.297). It is possible to recognise both of the behaviours recorded by Amabile as occurring at ArtsEd. As the students are called to intensely focus during each class, they have the option to decide to return to problems that are surfacing in other lessons at other times. Similarly, this is somewhat enforced by moving between different classes, teachers, spaces and disciplines.

In their 2012 article, 'Creative Thinking: Processes, Strategies, and Knowledge', Mumford, Medeiros et al. acknowledge a shift in understanding regarding what it is that creativity scholars are looking for. In response to this, the authors turn this definition into a question: "What allows people to generate high-quality, original, and elegant solutions to complex, novel, ill-defined problems?" (Mumford, Medeiros et al. 2012: p.31) In contemplating how this question might be answered in relation to ArtsEd, I will concentrate on a pivotal pedagogical notion in training: the use of imagery. Interwoven with the use of this method is the idea that the teachers continually aid the students with an empathetic understanding of the process that they are working through and the outcome that they are aiming for. Brookfield acknowledges the challenge in attempting to articulate the broad spectrum of feelings experienced by the teacher: "Passion, hope, doubt, fear, exhilaration, weariness, colleagueship, loneliness, glorious defeats, hollow victories, and, above all, the certainties of surprise and ambiguity…" (2006: 1) Whilst the overriding majority of the ArtsEd Musical Theatre staff identify as or have been professional performers, as teachers, too, they will encounter many of the emotions that the trainees experience.

The use of imagery by teachers featured across all of the classes observed in the School of Musical Theatre and was developed as a theme. This pattern becomes a provision for exploring a pedagogical approach that I argue is of paramount importance in documenting the training experience at ArtsEd. By using imagery and appealing to the emotions, the staff supports the musical theatre students in their problem-solving processes. I understand this use of imagery to be a key contributor in the successful production of highly-skilled triple threat performers. I am not suggesting here that the teachers are the problem-solvers but that, by using imagery, they facilitate the student to become an enabled and empowered performer. Imagery is used in a variety of ways on the ArtsEd Musical Theatre course. Whilst reminders of the past (in the form of verbal notes about physical habits and shortcomings) become scarcer as the training programme goes on, the discourse of the teaching staff is rich in associations with the students' potential futures. From here on, this will be called 'future-orientated encouragement'. The use of future-orientated encouragement, if fully internalised and understood by the student, becomes an effective motivational tool as the trainee problem-solves. The student can be understood, then, to be required to call on her creative skills to motivate her own practice.

> The Jazz class is divided so that the students can perform the *adage* in two groups. The half of the class that isn't performing first will 'note' their dancing partner. In a matter of seconds, the students are poised, ready to

> begin. Chris stands at the front of the class in the corner, iPod in hand: "So this song is called what? *Dust in the Wind*. What does that mean? That you're completely insignificant. That you have no impact on society or mankind. What impact would there be if you didn't exist?" He pauses… and turns on the music. The students are intensely focused as they perform the technical choreography, breathing deep into their *pliés*, pulling up into double pirouettes. I glance from face to face: each performer is engaged, watchable, something going on in their eyes, the tiniest hint of upturned lips. When the other half of the group have performed, Chris speaks to the class: "Okay, are you dust in the wind? Are you specks of meaningless nothingness? NO! We are artists! We have a valuable place in society. Every moment in history is remembered through its artists... We are artists. Never forget that."
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], November 2014)

The example above not only demonstrates Chris draw the student in to the imagery of the class soundtrack, but he also uses the metaphor as a creative stimulus to provoke her interpretation. In naming the musical theatre performer as an artist, Chris highlights the 21st century conception of the artist as "a unique and inspired individual who expresses and communicates his or her unique vision through the artwork" – an image that, as Sawyer indicates, is congruous with the Western cultural model of creativity (2012: p.23). Trainees continue to be encouraged to use future projections of themselves to get the best out of their training:

> Karen stops the first year Jazz class and changes her tone as she surveys the watching students: "This is gonna happen...during a performance...from day to day...you'll feel different emotions. If you train like this, if you set it up, then you can rely on your technique... ...if you're having a really terrible day and you just can't get your head around it...hopefully you're training will be good enough. (…) ...all of this industry is about how you cope with it emotionally, isn't it? It isn't like making a product that you can sell, is it? You can't separate yourselves... you are the business you're selling... (…) ....it's a funny old business - it's exciting, isn't it?
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], May 2015)

Paivio (1985) constructed an analytic framework with five imagery functions and, whilst each of these functions could be evident in musical theatre training, it is the category called 'motivation specific' that I wish to draw attention to. *Motivation specific* is used to image goal achievement (Munroe-Chandler et al 2007: p.104, italics in original). It is vital that the trainee is able to project an image of themselves as the triple threat, endowing the studio as the performance space. It is through this mode of visualisation that ArtsEd students are supported to remain focused on and create their goal, despite the testing challenges that training and life beyond it brings.

Illumination and Verification

Illumination has often been described as a 'light bulb moment'. At ArtsEd, there are moments of micro-illumination and events of macro-illumination. The challenge here is in the student being able to understand well enough the process they have followed to reach these moments and to mentally and physically log this, enabling the result to be repeated. When these occurrences might happen is unpredictable, and the hurdles that can prevent them from appearing are complex and, sometimes, inexplicable. As Rickards points out: "Creativity can be accidental, capricious, unexpected. But after the event we can review, analyse, and prepare ourselves the better for more deliberate attempts to stimulate the creative process" (1990: p.viii). Training is not, by any means, the end of the creative process, but it is the beginning. The phase of verification is ongoing as it is opened to a new and public audience of novices and experts.

In this chapter I have argued that creativity is being fostered at ArtsEd to support the development of the triple threat performer. The pedagogies can be recognised to reflect the structure of Wallas' (1926) four-stage creative process: problems are discovered and strategies put in place to solve them, facilitating the trainee to secure a reliable technique and engage with the seven standards. Mastering a strong technique and fully embracing the seven standards are requisites in order for the student to progress through the preparation and incubation stages of training: it is by doing so that the trainee is granted a gateway into another kind of creative process, that is, to interpret performance material, creating states of focus and flow to reach her peak performance.

CURATED INTERFACE (3) | *Talking back to training*

[I]f you feel written on, write back.
(Malea Powell, 2008: p.118))

This is an interface exploring experiences of hunger, happiness and hardship: a bittersweet pursuit to find our-selves. Memories of intimacy, determination, conformation, dreams and innocence are juxtaposed with distance, hindsight, nostalgia and experience to explore the shifting identities of ArtsEd graduates, reflecting on the ways in which training relationships, pedagogies, ideologies and ethics have affected our trajectories.

I left ArtsEd on the highest of highs: going straight into rehearsals for a year-long, No. 1 UK tour and, yet, my memory of the training experience is characterised by a diverse range of feelings. I remember the building as a place of extremes, marking times of utter contentment and moments of great frustration. Working with my ArtsEd peers confirms that, whilst we each have a unique experience of training as individuals, common themes arise from our memories – we depict a period of transformation, triumphs, trials, trauma and transition. Particularly dominant within our analyses are the impact of sociocultural pressures, the intensity and significance of the working and personal relationships formed, both with fellow students and with teachers, and reflecting on training as a process of being pigeonholed. We examine the effects of training on and through our minds, voices and bodies, then and now. We respect the clarity carried by hindsight, allowing ourselves to be amused, confused, troubled and enthused by our former selves.

Musical theatre training prepares students to enter a highly competitive, oversubscribed business. ArtsEd has developed and sustains an active working relationship with the industry, effectively combining the teaching of technique with up-to-date musical theatre material. However, training institutions must also prepare their students to enter unstable, and, at times, incomprehensible, territory, in which graduates are microscopically judged on features other than their talent. How does vocational training achieve this whilst dealing with the responsibility they hold to support and nurture the development of young bodies and minds?

The scope of this project is not broad enough to encompass a full critical investigation of the current industry, but the performer-training-industry loop circulates and recirculates both inside this work and outside it. Where does training end and the industry begin? How have the elements of the loop been addressed by training in the past? How might the future of each component benefit through the development of a transparent and equal dialogue between all three parts? What is gained by talking back to training?

"To me, Jackie telling us to jump into the splits was the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard in my life and, then, I somehow got employed to do it as a can-can dancer. I mean, I'm fucking terrible at stuff like that and, yet, someone paid me to jump into the splits. And in my head I was thinking, "Thanks, Jackie", because I would have said that I couldn't do it, but because she was like "Get the hell on with it." (Hannah M.)

JACKIE JAZZ

Her terrifying reputation preceding her, I am warned of her ways prior to my first day at the school by a number of animated second and third year students. Sinewy, tanned limbs, white blonde hair and icy blue eyes, an iron body matches her steely demeanour. I am told that, in days gone by, she ruled with a wooden stick and a lit cigarette, but discover that now she is well-armed with sharp fingernails and an endless supply of wry and cutting quips. When, in our first Jazz lesson, I sit proudly in the box splits before helplessly flopping forwards, head and torso flat against the studio floor, Jackie drops to my level to inform me, "You're not strong enough for that…yet", manoeuvring my legs into a narrower position.

We are drilled with military precision, our bodies pushed beyond their limits as we find ways to get used to performing burpees on demand, to push through the seemingly endless tricep dip track, to execute hundreds of sit-ups. We do not dance, we train to dance.

Figure 16: First year Jazz class (2005). 'Jackie Jazz'.

Please engage with Audiovisual Track 2 now:
Will Young returns to ArtsEd, *This Morning*, ITV, March 2013.

DANCE CLASSES

The dance teaching is remembered, by many of us, as one of the most hard-hitting aspects of training. During the PAR workshops we recall our dance classes, frequently prefixing them with the teacher's name: Jackie Jazz; Chris Jazz; Jill Jazz; Sandra Ballet; David Ballet; Jill Ballet; and 'Valerie Ballerie'. Other staff members, too, are fondly remembered as 'Daddy G', Timmy and 'DAsh'. These labels somehow soften and make familiar the physical and psychological challenge of partaking in such classes, and signal, too, how our associations with the experiences of each class are inextricably bound up and impacted by the memory of whomever taught the class.

Jackie Bristow, the Head of First Year and Jazz tutor, taught at ArtsEd for thirty-nine years before retiring in 2009. Tales of her teaching conduct inform of a punishing regime and, yet, we remember her and her classes with fondness, gratefulness and respect. When she leaves, she leaves behind her a legacy unforgettable to those with whom she worked with and taught.

Please listen to Audio Track 6 now:
Corridor outside singing rooms, ArtsEd, 2015.

PAIN MANAGEMENT: A POEM

The normality of pain: once I crawled
Up the stairs to my first floor flat.

The silence of pain: once I wept inaudibly
Choked back my sobs while you sat
In your bedroom with other 'mates'
And did arts and crafts
Effervescent, giddy,
I was flattened by the laughs.
My release was to write
To speak to my Mum
Who stood up for my soul
Who cried when I was numb.

The misunderstood pain: you called me an enigma
What you didn't understand
Was that the sweat was tears
And you didn't hold my hand.

Instead you thought a verbal hit
Would provoke some positive action
Yet I could have told you that I respond better
To the law of positive attraction.
The compressed pain: do this, feel that
Don't answer back.
Everyone's replaceable
You're all worthy of the sack.
Be great though, darlin', we believe
That you could hit the dizzying heights,
And remember it was us who first
Saw your name in lights.

SWEET FREEDOM

Due to the fact that we attained our Grade 5 Music Theory certificates prior to coming to ArtsEd, Tricia and are excused from Stuart's first year Music Theory classes on Friday afternoons. We slip outside the ArtsEd building, acknowledging the strangeness of this sudden hour of freedom. We walk to Woolworths on the High Road to treat ourselves to some Pic 'n' Mix, stopping, too, at Holland and Barratt to purchase the fat metabolisers that we have been recommended by the college gym instructor.

PaR WORKSHOP (26.4.15)

Hannah M: "Oh, and…! And…I've got another memory! That gym instructor…I can't remember what he was called…Alex, was he called?"

Emily: "Which one?"

Hannah M: "**Really** beefy."

Me: "The first year one? The South African guy who gave us all a diet plan?"

"Yes! Who told me to buy diet pills from Holland and Barratt. When I look back at pictures of myself I was practically **skeletal**…"

Me: "They were fat metabolisers, weren't they?"

Hannah M: "Yeah, fat metabolisers. Now I look back at that, I'm like…

Conleth: (interjects) "That's really uncool."

Hannah M: "Why would I have done that?"

Conleth: "That's terrible."

Hannah M: "Ridiculous."

A TASK

8. Take some time to reflect on those who taught you whilst you were at ArtsEd. Using a separate piece of paper for each, respond to the following statements:

- ***Things you taught me;***
- ***Things you didn't teach me;***
- ***Things I want to tell you now.***

Find somewhere to place each response: wherever feels 'right' to you.

TALKING BACK TO TRAINING

Things you taught me

Figure 17: Studio 201. PaR Workshop (2015).

"What you did teach me is '**discipline**', so I've put you in 201 because that was probably the most disciplined room in terms of dance training and in terms of respect. And also that bridges into hierarchy in the industry…which is also hierarchy in the school… for me, Chris was the highest status so his room…that's where I think it came from. And also the technicality of dance - that's where I learnt most of that, in 201 - whether that be Ballet with David or Jazz with Chris." (Tom)

"Just beside where the cubby hole used to be, there always used to be the sign in sheets, just outside the office, so I've put '**discipline**' here: punctuality, professionalism and, actually, the whole of this corridor sort of sums it up, really." (Michelle)

"I'm gonna put the **'bravery'** one up here, outside room 214, because this is the room, acting-wise, where I think the most development happened…for me…and for other people…in terms of taking risks. Like the Song Workshop classes where most people ended up in tears…it was the room where we all went on quite a journey." (Michelle)

"I've put '**technique**' up here by room 201 because it's where most of the core technique lessons happened […]." (Michelle)

Things you didn't teach me

"**Being yourself in an audition room**. They teach you to audition so well but I wish they'd told me to be more myself in the audition room rather than being a robot." (Michelle)

"In the tutorials we'd get told all sorts, we'd get given all kinds of talks but I don't think we were ever really told that **you need to survive when you're not in work**. … Musical theatre isn't the only thing and a lot of the time you won't even be working… there are big gaps and you've gotta do something." (Joff)

"I've put '**resilience**' up on the front door of ArtsEd…even though ArtsEd told you about the outside world, nothing can really prepare you for it until you get out there." (Michelle)

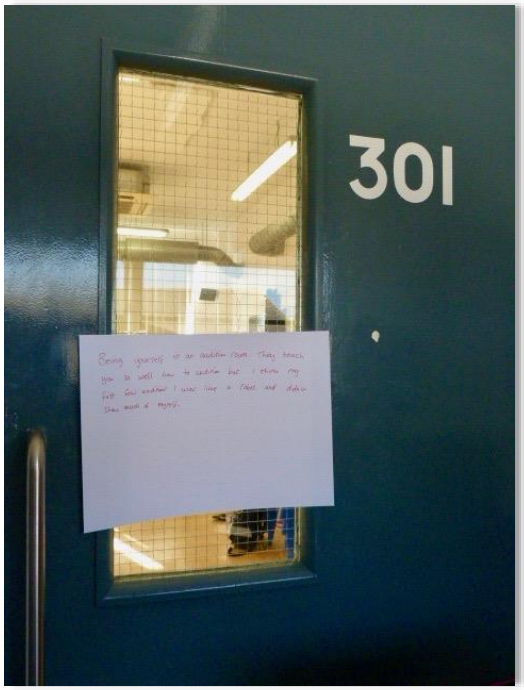
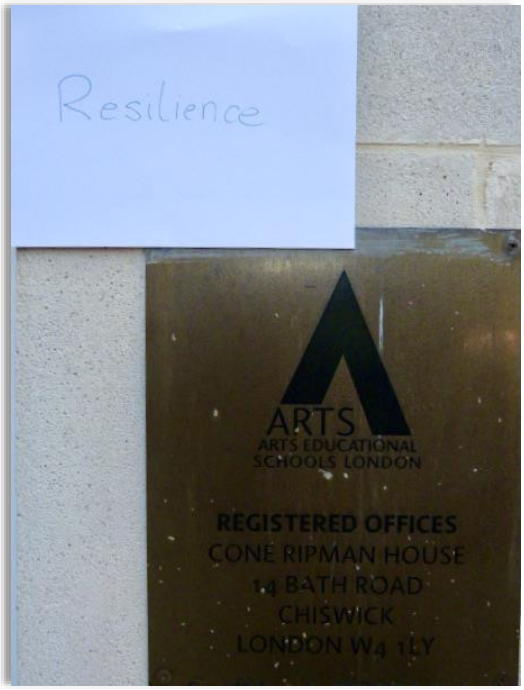


Figure 18: Studio 301. PaR Workshop (2015).



"**Teach me how to have a sideline job and career to support myself**. This year, I probably would have still been doing musical theatre if I had a profession which could support that on the sideline. I've been in a position where I don't want to work in a nursery for £8 an hour, at thirty years old, with a mortgage to pay, you know? They wouldn't have to spend a long time, but just to make you realise that if you get a job...invest some of that time and money. I was in the West End for two years, I could have easily done a course or an internship… (Lucy)

Figure 19: Outside the ArtsEd building. PaR Workshop (2015).

Things I want to tell you now

"The '**thank you'**, here, because when we were here, this is where all the teachers were…" (Michelle)

"**Be kind, constructive, not destructive**. I'd tell them to support and nurture – remind the students of why they chose this profession, their passion and love for what they do. Sometimes I felt like there was so much negativity […] did need to learn about rejection and how tough and competitive it was, but why would we put ourselves through this? Why would we choose to go into this?. Sometimes you just have to remind people, otherwise they lose hope. I've learnt from leaving here the confidence to know myself…" (Lucy)

Figure 20: Bath Road sign. PaR Workshop (2015).

"**You inspired and damaged me** is both positive and a negative as in I was very inspired by you as a building and what you did in terms of…I couldn't have had a career of doing stuff that I did enjoy, mostly. However, certain things have happened in this building that I think did create damage in me…that I've had to do quite a bit of work to, you know, make better." (Tom)

"Since I was doing the company, I've felt very, very much a responsibility to be training people so…I've picked outside ArtsEd because **I'd like to tell them about other ways to train actors** that may exist in this school, but I've not seen it…so I've chosen the front of the building because that's the gateway into the learning place." (Tom)

A HARD LESSON

I am eighteen years old and, whilst I will be taking a planned gap year following my A-levels next year during which I plan to audition for drama school, I decide I will audition for the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. At the time, I am rehearsing for an am-dram production of Allan Bennet's Habeas Corpus, playing Felicity Rumpers. A local, professional actor, Peter Townsend, is cast as Dr Wicksteed: he is a fine actor with the richest, most velvety voice and a tremendous warmth of character, and he takes a great interest in my vocational career focus. Arriving at the Theatre School, I discover a card with my name on it, taped to the door of the auditionees' waiting room. Inside the card I find the words: "Hit the heights, baby! Peter x." When I receive a letter a few days later informing me that my audition has been unsuccessful, the rejection (temporarily) floors me. The lack of feedback is particularly gutting. Peter, in response to learning of my unsuccessful audition, offers to "have a peek" at my audition notes. We speak on the phone a few days later and he relays the comments written by the panel on my audition form: "Too posh, too pretty, too nice."

The explanation, relayed by Peter, allowed me to create my own, sorely needed personal narrative to alleviate the agony of rejection and account for my failure at audition. Personal experience over the years tells me that the comments written about me reflect the tone and nature of many audition notes across the training and performance industry: unconstructive and ethically unsound. The description of me, the theatre-obsessed eighteen-year old auditionee with stars in her eyes, as "[t]oo posh, too pretty, too nice" avoids a critique of my acting ability and now, nearly twenty years later, I wonder if my kind friend provided me with a sensitively abridged summary of my feedback to protect my spirit and ego. My fierce and all-consuming determination to train–and to learn of and negotiate the barriers which had prevented me from doing so–resulted in some useful feedback. A personal letter from the then Principal of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School informed that the school had a strict 'no feedback' policy. However, recognising my "considerable potential", he was willing to provide me with some further information regarding my audition. The panel had deemed some of the material I had presented to be "unsuitable", suggesting that I may not be able to identify with the character of Rowena from Sarah Daniels' *Masterpieces*. Furthermore, my monologues had been interpreted as being too staged and portrayed an interpretation which the panel had concluded might have been learned from an acting teacher. It was a hard, but essential, lesson. Fourteen years of Speech and Drama lessons had won me countless trophies in eistedfodds and festivals, supported the development of sharp communication skills and confidence, allowed me to achieve vocational LAMDA and Guildhall qualifications, indulged my love of poetry, and further infused my passion for live performance. But it was time to learn something new.

My new acting tutor is, somewhat ironically, a teacher at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. During our first meeting we sit at the small table in his dimly lit lounge. It is cluttered with books and I quickly harness my focus with imaginary blinkers, stopping myself from gazing around the room in search of clues about the stranger who sits opposite me. Silent, he gazes at me for what feels like a long time, taking in my long, brushed blonde hair, lightly applied make-up, and colour coordinated outfit before suggesting that my well-groomed appearance might be the first thing to (re)consider. He flatly refuses my offers of payment for his coaching, but is willing to accept red wine in place of a fee. His acting coaching is honest, direct, challenging, and enlightening. It is within the domestic setting of his kitchen, responding to his request for me to do the washing up and then begin my speech as Goneril from King Lear, that catalyses a creative epiphany which inspires and dramatically changes my practice.

Please listen to Audio Track 7 now:
Voice and speech class, ArtsEd, 2015.

CHAPTER FOUR | THE ETHICS OF TRAINING

In the moment of performance, the "all-singing, all-dancing, (all-acting)" triple threat performer showcases her excellent technique, a high level of skill and, arguably, her creativity. Whilst a spectator of musical theatre may witness a 'polished' performer shifting easily between script, song and choreography, this integrated form creates multiple challenges onstage and offstage for the practitioner – obstacles that are rarely seen or discussed outside the performance industry. These challenges include, but are not limited to: the maintenance of an extreme level of discipline; pressures to conform physically and, sometimes, intellectually, to a certain casting type; the precarious nature of theatre employment; problematic power relations between teachers, agents, casting directors, production teams and performers; and a culture of opacity and rejection. The reasons for their preclusion in scholarship and training and industry dialogues in the UK are, I suggest, due to issues of access (which are discussed more fully in the Introduction), concerns about repercussions surrounding the act of speaking out, and to these features being deeply internalised in individuals and, therefore, unarticulated and potentially not recognised, and undocumented. Addressing a number of these matters, I focus in this chapter on questions of ethics in training.

Commenting on conservatoire graduates, Catherine Alexander observes:

> "[S]ometimes there is a sort of actorly sheen about drama school actors. They seem too polished to be real. … Is there something about the current drama school training that really crushes what I would call a maverick sensibility and creates carbon copy types that all sound and look alike, for an industry that wants thinner and thinner actors, with impossibly big eyes?" (Alexander in Kapsali, 2014: p.222)

In this chapter I will argue that, while musical theatre performers continue to be at risk of being judged solely as cloned, interchangeable, homogenous automatons, what might be called the performer's 'apparatus' – the technique, skill and style with which they are equipped during the training period – is always affected by the highly individual history, experience, personality and subjectivity of the trainee, and by the relationships that they build during the training process. I postulate that this human element exists as an inseparable feature and crucial constituent of the performer's identity and that it should be embraced by those who find themselves 'on the other

side of the table'.[1] When this integral element is considered, essential questions regarding the responsibility of training are brought to the fore. What part does training play in shaping the individual and how might individuals shape training? How might the ArtsEd case study inform thinking about the notions of body image, training age,[2] relationships in training, mental and physical health in training, undocumented learning, life after training, and training as an evolving practice? How might questioning the concepts of power, knowledge and control offer an insight into and improve the current and the future landscape of musical theatre training and the performance industry? These questions are pertinent to a consideration of ethics because they highlight critical particularities of training and the theatre industry that affect the performer, their training, and post-training experiences.

In this chapter, the ethics of training will be viewed through a selection of theoretical lenses including the 'breaking' method, the high stakes nature of training (evidenced through the hidden curriculum) and the industry, body image and aesthetic labour, and discourses of training. This approach allows dominant patterns that have surfaced in the ethnographic data to be explored. In addition, I analyse shifts within the curriculum and pedagogies at ArtsEd to evidence a training process that is evolving, inquiring into how ArtsEd staff, specifically, are developing new approaches to accommodate the specific needs of musical theatre students.

Ethics in musical theatre training

Conversations about ethics in relation to musical theatre training may conjure ideas of megalomaniacs imposing totalitarian regimes and 'breaking' trainees (before 'rebuilding' them), and this is a method which is neither wholly fictional, nor imagined. The idea that some performer training institutions use a method that involves trainees being 'broken' is mentioned by Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2010: p.136). To draw attention to the notion of 'breaking' is significant, but what is omitted is a definition describing what this may involve (ibid.):

> Can any act of intentional destruction of what aspiring actors bring with them when they enter professional actor training be beneficial, ultimately? Does the alleged end result (an actor trained according to any one school or ideal) justify the means

[1] I refer here to the casting table: the audition room is usually set up with a table or tables behind which the panel sit to observe the auditioning performer.
[2] The majority of students on the BA (Hons) ArtsEd Musical Theatre course enrol at the of eighteen and the oldest student at the time of my fieldwork will be twenty-four when he graduates. How does training age implicate training? What are the ethical consequences of these age limitations?

> ("breaking" the actor)? Do those involved in doing the "breaking" have the knowledge needed to ensure that process of breaking does not leave patients for mental health services for the rest of their lives, rather than leading to well-trained actors? Is any infliction/suffering (assuming "breaking" entails suffering at least temporarily) on another human being justified or even justifiable? (p.136)

Meyer-Dinkgräfe draws attention to some vital questions regarding this process but, due to his fleeting negotiation of the concept, his questions are left unanswered. Although he asserts that trainees are broken "so that they can be built up again from scratch in line with the ideas and ideals of the respective programme or trainer", (2010: p.136) Meyer-Dinkgräfe does not consider precisely *how* this breaking method has been employed in training. I suggest that this process, along with the implications and effects of this way of working, warrants further investigation: this will enable historical and contemporary training practices to be used as an important tool to inform and develop training in the future.

A small number of lucid studies focusing specifically on actor training and ethics have recently emerged. Mark Seton notes that there is "a growing field of literature and documentation of emerging ethical practices in dance and music studios" (2010: p.6) that fails to address acting. It should be noted that musical theatre is also missing from consideration. Highlighting the impact of the working relationships formed between the student and the teacher in training, Seton asserts that ethical and sustainable practices within training will influence similar practices in performer employment. Seton's attention to the shortcomings of certain actor training courses in Australia is of value for informing how to understand particular themes: themes such as vulnerability and submission to discipline–which feature in Seton's (2010) work– were also developed in response to the ArtsEd case study data. Accordingly, questions arise around the emergence and use of common pedagogical methods across (international) training institutions.

I will explore a notion that is implicit in the questions posited by Meyer-Dinkgräfe, the themes illustrated by Seton, and which also emerged throughout the data collected at ArtsEd: the high stakes nature of vocational training (and the performance industry). Contemplating the trained performer within the performance industry, Meyer-Dinkgräfe suggests that the following factors surface as issues when thinking in an ethical context: the possibility of psychological damage to the actor; unemployment and, consequently, what actors may be prepared to subject themselves to in order to be employed; and the duty of the performer to maintain a certain level of (performance industry) etiquette. Yet, despite these risks, "too many people want to be actors"

(Alexander in Kapsali, 2014: 222). What is it, then, that motivates a person to perform, and, how are these risks manifested in day-to-day training? Meyer-Dinkgräfe's provocation is a useful springboard; by placing performer training within an ethical setting, a range of pertinent questions are raised regarding the current condition of the performance industry. Making connections between the issues raised by Seton, Meyer-Dinkgräfe and the training at ArtsEd I propose that, whilst there is evidence to suggest that methods aligning with the 'breaking' method have been employed by staff at the school historically, a careful analysis of the current training reveals notable shifts that are beginning to reshape the training process significantly. From an ethical perspective, these progressive changes in training are vitally important. However, investigating how training and the industry are maintained as a high stakes entity I will show how the complex relationship between the elements within the performer-training-industry loop makes embedding these ethical shifts a challenging affair.

Training and industry: a game of high stakes

The definition of the phrase 'high stakes' can be interpreted in multiple ways: I will focus here on the idea of the industry as a 'game', concentrating on audition practice before thinking about training, high-stakes testing, and the significance of the hidden curriculum at ArtsEd. Investigating these matters is important because it uncovers tacit rules which operate in training and the industry, drawing attention to the expectations placed on the performer and how these are instilled in students within the training setting.

The audition process

It is not uncommon for the musical theatre industry to be described as a game. Performers are expected to consistently be "on top of their game" and might be considered to be "playing" or be "in the (audition or industry) game". But what does it mean for a performer to be on top of her game? I suggest that it does not only indicate that the practitioner must continuously be at her technical best and able to demonstrate their ability on demand whilst under extreme pressure, but that that they must, also, be at their physical, social and, one would hope, her mental best, too. This can apply to the performer who is employed, but I am particularly interested here in the performer who is auditioning.

In my own experience, when asked by those outside the industry what I am doing whilst between performing contracts, my answer–"I'm auditioning"–has often been met with

sympathetic responses. And yet, for the performer who is not employed in performance work, each audition offers an opportunity to perform, a meeting with a production team, and ignites the possibility of work. The audition, Deborah Dean asserts, is "the central mechanism of entry to work" (2005: p. 768) and, I would add, to performer training. Nonetheless, auditioning is a double-edged process, made complex by a number of factors. First, securing auditions can be a difficult task. If the performer has an agent, then she relies on the relationship that her agent has with casting directors, the commitment they have to supporting each of their clients to find work, and their ability to submit the performer for suitable roles. Performers who join co-operative agencies must fully trust their colleagues and fellow performers to work in their best interest and are entrusted to support others to find work. The Co-operative Personal Management Association (CMPA) acknowledge some of the drawbacks of co-operative agencies, stating: "There are still some casting directors who are wary of co-ops, citing the lack of continuity of personnel" and "[e]ven the best co-op cannot compete with a top-flight conventional agent" (CMPA, 2019). If a performer is self-represented, she must work to find out about upcoming auditions and castings. Whilst platforms such as Spotlight, The Stage, Casting Call Pro (CCP), CastCall, Castweb and CastNet can support performers to search for auditions, many casting directors will only consider applications from agents. Open calls, also known as 'cattle calls',[3] can require a performer to wait in line, often early in the morning, with hundreds of other performers to register prior to being allocated a timeslot to audition at some point during the day.

Secondly, attending auditions often results in the performer having to take (unpaid) time off sideline employment, often with very little notice. Although there are some companies that allow flexible working and others that look specifically to employ performers and support them to attend castings, many businesses have little understanding or interest in enabling the performer to pursue her chosen vocation. The performer who teaches alongside auditioning is usually made responsible for finding cover for the classes she is to miss. If represented, performers frequently feel obliged to attend every casting that is offered to them by their agent and this pressure is often reinforced by the agent making assumptions regarding their client's immediate availability. The act of auditioning, then, can be understood to carry a certain level of risk for the performer: taking regular leave from a side job may affect her financial situation and, ultimately, jeopardise

[3] The dehumanising language employed to describe open auditions raises questions as to the relationship between auditionee/performer and auditioner/industry representative(s), and about how the performer may or may not be valued. Many 'cattle calls' are open to the public and, resultantly, both amateur and professional performers may attend: this, too, draws attention to matters of value, and to questions regarding publicity and the commercialisation of theatre.

her employment contract, both outcomes holding the potential to impact the performer's living circumstances, but turning down an audition may influence the performer's relationship with her agent, initiating concerns regarding the chances of future auditions. Adding to the financial burden that taking unpaid leave may place on the performer, the auditionee must fund her own travel expenses to and from each casting and, often, the fees of a pre-audition rehearsal pianist.

Further challenges prior to setting foot in the audition room include the limited window of time in which the artist is expected to prepare for a casting, often being sent sides and sheet music the day before the audition, and pre-audition nerves. From the moment the auditionee steps into the audition building, she must be prepared to be scrutinised from every angle. From conversations with casting assistants outside the audition room, to the the performance of their "best sixteen bars",[4] to discussions with the audition pianist, the performer is observed. Whilst the performer may be dealing with surges of adrenalin, illness, injury, worries about her side job, and how she is being judged by the audition panel, she is required to put these feelings aside in the moment of performance (that is, in this case, the audition). The auditionee is aiming to impress a panel ranging in number that usually comprises between two and ten people: in musical theatre auditions, this often includes a casting director, director, musical director, choreographer and producer(s). In addition, auditions are sometimes filmed, most commonly in order that they can be shared with an extended panel of international producers.

Post-audition, if 'cut', the performer must deal with being rejected by the panel: frequently this comes without feedback of any kind. If recalled, the performer may be asked by the panel to return either almost immediately, later in the day, or the following day or week for the next round of auditions. Alternatively, the practitioner may be thanked for attending and have to wait for an unspecified amount of time in the hope that the casting team contact their agent to offer a recall date. Although some casting directors make a courtesy call to agents to inform them of the outcome of their client's audition, whether the performer attends one audition or nine rounds of recalls, there is no guarantee that the performer will be informed they have been eliminated from the process. While the performer is likely to have a sense as to how she herself performed in the audition room, such perceptions mean little: an exceptional audition does not necessarily result in a recall or a job offer, just as a poor or mediocre audition does not mean a rejection. A lack of information for the performer due to the opacity of casting politics or a lack of communication between the casting team, agent and performer contributes to the high stakes nature of the

[4] It is common practice for the auditioning performer to be asked to sing a short excerpt from one of their song choices, ideally a section of material that best shows their vocal and artistic ability.

audition process. More specifically, many practitioners describe a period of time following each audition during which he or she replays the memory of the event, micro-analysing each remembered detail of the interaction for clues that may signal the outcome of the meeting.

The current audition process framework, then, features a number of ethically problematic factors. Thus, training institutions not only have a responsibility to support students to develop their musical theatre skills, but to prepare trainees for the challenging set of conditions that characterise the industry at present. Thinking about ArtsEd supports an understanding as to how, specifically, the training institution's curricula addresses this important aspect.

High-stakes testing and the hidden curriculum

The high stakes nature of the industry is recreated in training and one way in which this can be interpreted is by exploring the definition of 'high stakes' when it is used in conjunction with the word 'test'. The high stakes-testing phenomenon has been theorised by many education scholars over the last twenty years. High-stakes testing typically refers to national or state-wide standardised achievement tests (Marchant, 2004: p.2). Marchant points out that this form of testing was developed in an effort to "implement accountability measures for districts, schools, teachers, and (…) individual students" and is now used as a gauge to evaluate "the success of students, teachers, schools, districts and even states" (2004: ibid.) Paul Sabey (former Director of the Musical Theatre Programme and Associate Principal at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, London), Scott D. Harrison and Jessica O'Bryan (2014; 2015) explore aspects of assessment practices in musical theatre training, focusing on the Bachelor of Musical Theatre degree designed by Sabey at Queensland Conservatorium, a tertiary musical school within Griffith University, Australia (QCGU). The article reports the results of a continuous assessment regime trialled by the staff and students on the Musical Theatre strand on the degree course and focuses on teacher perceptions of the process (Sabey et al., 2015).

Interestingly, Arts Ed's Chris Hocking and Sabey were one-time colleagues. Hocking describes Sabey as a major influence who has not only affected his own vision as to how to develop the ArtsEd (BA) Hons Musical Theatre course, but can be identified as a pioneer of triple-threat training (Hocking, interview, 17 June 2015). At ArtsEd, in order to gain support, validation and accreditation[5] for their practice, formal assessment processes have been developed and refined in

[5] The college is currently supported by a number of external organisations, including: The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation; City University of London; Federation of Drama Schools; Trinity College London; CDMT; The

recent years. This process of formalisation has catalysed an important ethical shift at the school in the form of increased staff accountability and this, along with a rise in peer observations, contributes to the development of an official paper trail of the training process. However, my interest here is in thinking about features of the ArtsEd pedagogy and training practice which remain undocumented and yet which are, I argue, of tantamount importance in characterising the ideological stance transferred through training and maintained in the musical theatre industry. This promotes the development of a particular kind of attitude, discipline, body ideal and work ethic within a high stakes environment. Analysing this 'hidden curriculum' foregrounds certain aspects of the pedagogies at ArtsEd and reinforces the significance of the performer-training-industry loop and the reflexive relationship of the three factors within it.

The term 'hidden curriculum' has been interpreted in various ways in education literature. Whilst there is not space within the ambit of this chapter to review the specificities of the many hidden curriculum theories, it is significant to note that "all senses of the expression imply that it is somehow obscured from general notice" (Thornton, 2014: p.383). Michaela Minarechová writes (2012):

> [B]esides the formal school curriculum students also come into contact with the so-called unwritten curriculum, which is characterized by its informality and 'unplanned' nature as opposed to the school curriculum. This unwritten process of education is known as the hidden curriculum. (pp. 87-88)

Kentli (2009) asserts that a significant number of theorists have explored how pedagogical practices of education inform and socialise students. He writes:

> the hidden curriculum as a socialization of schooling can be identified by the social interactions within an environment. Thus, it is in process at all times, and serves to transmit tacit messages to students about values, attitudes and principles. Hidden curriculum can reveal through an evaluation of the environment and the unexpected, unintentional interactions between teachers and students which revealed critical pedagogy. (p.88)

Council of International Schools (CIS); SSAT (The Schools, Students and Teachers Network); OfS (Office for Students); Advance HE; and AMTC (Alliance of Musical Theatre Conservatoires).

The hidden curriculum at ArtsEd can be recognised as a powerful tool through which the staff filter vital information about the industry and, consequently, inform students as to how they are expected to perform as triple threat practitioners. In previous chapters I have explored key aspects that contribute towards this process at ArtsEd: in Chapter 2 I examined how students (and staff members) become acclimatised to particular sociocultural and environmental norms inside and outside the training studio; and in Chapter 3 I draw a link between the pedagogical approaches at ArtsEd and creative process theories, exploring how the staff negotiate preparing the performer to work as a "corporate actor" (Russell, 2007) while also enabling her to engage actively as a creator. I will concentrate here on how the staff embody the high stakes culture of the industry in everyday training, addressing not only the technical and artistic development of the student but also working to shape the performer's mental attitude. Modelling a behavioural paradigm that the student is expected to accept and into which she must play, staff members reify the high stakes industry culture, normalising the act of testing.

The role of continuous testing plays an important part within the training environment, reflecting the high stakes culture of the industry. If the aim of the graduate is to secure performance work, then strong audition technique is a necessary and invaluable skill for the performer. The audition itself is a form of test: as I have pointed out earlier in this chapter, the auditionee is not only judged on her technical merit and interpretative skills but also on her physical appearance and social conduct. Accordingly, students must become familiar with the practice of auditioning, and being tested is a common feature within the training environment. The ArtsEd Student Handbook informs the student: "Monitoring of your progress is continuous. Your tutors will let the relevant Head of Department know immediately if they have any concerns about your level of attainment, discipline or attendance" (ArtsEd, 2014: p.12-13). Testing for summative purposes is carried out halfway through the academic year–resulting in the student being provided with grades for effort and attainment–and at the end of the summer term, when tutors give the student a percentage mark for her classwork: this incorporates effort and professional behaviour (ArtsEd, 2014). Also in the summer term, the trainee has formal assessments in each discipline before an assessment panel of internal examiners, which may include an external assessor (ibid.).

Delineating the continuous assessment regime at QCGU, Harrison et al. (2014) reiterate Sabey's (2013) focus on the importance of the sliding scale of assessment across the degree programme: there is "an emphasis on skill-building earlier in the degree, and an emphasis on performance

later in the programme" (2014: p.161). This aspect of Sabey's structure is reflected at ArtsEd. The third year student is formally assessed solely on public performances and rehearsal processes for these productions. Twice-termly, the first and second year student performs within her class group for a whole school (of Musical Theatre) and staff audience. Alongside her peers, she presents either numbers learned in Song and Dance classes or a class project, the latter of which concentrates on acting, singing or dancing and marks another summative assessment. Engaging in formative assessment, the first year student performs individually before her year group in a weekly Performance Class.[6] In the second year, Performance Classes become an Audition Classes.

> It is just after 5pm on a light, warm June evening. The majority of the second year students form an audience packed, sardine-like, into the far end of Studio 201. Their bodies are overlapping – limbs over limbs, an arm slung round a student's neck, a tired head resting on another's shoulder. Despite signs of physical fatigue, there is a sense of anticipation in the students' chatter. A piano is positioned to one side of the audience and Singing Tutor, Huw Geraint Griffith, and Senior Singing Tutor, Chris Whitehead, are seated and stood alongside the instrument. A table is set up amongst the students and, as requested by Chris Hocking, this is where I sit to observe – a pseudo-panelist for those 'auditioning'. Five students sit alongside me and, with Chris, create an audition panel for their peers. Chris enters the space, the outfit of a t-shirt, shorts and dance trainers that he was wearing to teach a second-year Jazz class in this studio just prior to this class is now chinos and a shirt, and he sits at the table, leafing through the seven performing students' CVs before him. He nods to a student runner who leaves the room to collect the first performer from the corridor. As Kirsty W., the first student enters, Chris goes into the role of the auditioner – on this occasion, a character who is polite but slightly detached with a clipped tone. Kirsty W. reads a short piece of text (that she has been given outside the room a few minutes previously) before offering four song choices, from which Chris chooses one. Kirsty W. launches into a committed and captivating performance of 'No Good Deed' from *Wicked*. As she finishes, I glance at the quiet, watching

[6] On a rotating basis, with between eight and ten students performing per week, each student presents one song that she has been working on with her singing technique and repertoire teachers.

> audience, a little relieved that I have stifled my instinctive response to applaud Kirsty W.'s performance. Chris continues: "And let's have sixteen bars of 'Send In The Clowns'." Kirsty W. has a brief conversation with Chris Whitehead, who is playing the piano, before readying herself to begin. As he begins to play, gone is the sympathetic, expressive accompanist whom we witnessed in the previous number: instead, Chris imitates the incompetent audition pianist, challenging Kirsty W. to compete and hold her nerve against a relentlessly *fortissimo* dynamic, sporadic tempo and multiple (unwritten) key changes, which she does, unflinching. Chris asks Kirsty W. to return get changed for a dance call, asking that she wears "heels and something sexy" and informing her that she will be auditioning for *Poker Face: The Lady GaGa Musical.*
>
> (2nd year Audition Class, ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, June 2015)

In auditions, performers must deal with their own adrenalin and nerves, maintaining their composure despite challenging external factors such as inadequate accompanists, inattentive panels, a diverse range of audition spaces ranging from West End theatres to box rooms, and a lack of clarity in the teaching of choreography. They must accept that they are being judged as to their appearance, how they might 'fit' a role or the vision of a production team or director, their ability to learn and interpret material, their response to direction, and their attitude. In a first-round audition, there is an expectation for the performer to demonstrate not only her technical and interpretative skills, but to be enthusiastic, bright, interesting, able to talk and answer questions confidently about themselves both in relation to their training and performance work and their outside interests, and to be reliable. Unlike the training environment, in which the staff and students develop and support each other with deep, genuine camaraderie, the highly competitive audition circuit can be rife with inflated egos and selfish behaviour. One way in which ArtsEd Musical Theatre staff members address this feature is by assuming distinct teaching personas, switching seamlessly and quickly between histrionic outbursts, placid observations, and mock-tyrannical instructions. Whilst, at times, these can be humorous, the dynamic of classes is always underpinned by a focused, unwavering work ethic and a duty of care for the student.

In ArtsEd audition classes, then, staff members employ strategies through which the students are prepared for an industry in which they will frequently be tested: sometimes without clear criteria and often without any form of feedback (other than being 'culled' or cut from the audition process). As the audition class described above continued, the seven auditioning students changed and returned to a 'dance call', conducted by Chris.

> The seven auditionees stagger themselves in the performance space. Chris thanks them for coming back to dance, to which they chorus in unison: "Thank you for having me." He teaches the choreography clearly and speedily, the women carefully and quickly replicating his movement. They seem unphased by their audience who are watching them intently. At one point, the dancers are instructed to 'twerk': they all do so unquestioningly. Chris directs them to perform the choreography in pairs, before standing in a line whilst the panel discuss their performances. Chris addresses Emily: "Thank you very much, that's all we need from you." She smiles, thanks Chris and leaves the room. Chris asks Katie and Kirsty I. to dance again, followed by Leila and Kirsty W. and Jess and Perola. The women return to the line whilst the panel talk again. Chris thanks Kirsty I., Jess and Leila for attending, and they thank the panel before leaving the studio. Katie, Perola and Kirsty W. are asked to dance again. They stand on the line whilst the panel discuss. Katie and Kirsty W. are thanked and they thank the panel and leave the room. One student, Perola, remains, and Chris offers her 'the job'. The watching students break into applause, the challenge of their support and appreciation being silenced evidenced in their cheers and impromptu standing ovation as the auditionees return to the room.
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, June 2015)

Whilst the audition class is a relatively realistic imitation of some industry auditions, it highlights a selection of unethical features which I will return to discuss a little later in the chapter. The expectation for the students to present an acceptable 'professional' attitude and work ethic is not limited to audition classes. This way of behaving is impressed upon trainees from their very first day of training. The performance element within training cannot be isolated to weekly

performance or audition classes, rather training, itself, can be understood as a performance as trainees perfect the discipline, attitude, skills and focus that is required of an ArtsEd triple threat performer: this must be practiced and be seen to be practiced at all times. Becoming an ArtsEd student, the performer must quickly become accustomed to the explicit and tacit rules of each staff member as, although many of the staff have the same or similar expectations for the students' behaviour and share a common ideology, their individual histories inform and shape their nuanced teaching styles and, also, the version of the hidden curriculum which they contribute. Whilst the development and execution of solid technical skills is a requisite for students to progress through their training, the performance of discipline is always at the forefront of the pedagogies. Hence, students must show a keen sense of self-awareness, understanding that the way in which they communicate–verbally and non-verbally, emotionally and, particularly importantly in this argument, corporeally–around their staged or prepared performances is likely to be watched and judged by staff members and, on graduating, by those involved in casting and production. Surveillance and self-surveillance–both of which are salient features within the industry–are also brought to the fore in ArtsEd training pedagogies and in my observations of students. These notions will be further addressed in the following section, through the consideration of another element which dominates training and the industry: the performer's physical appearance and the concept of aesthetic labour.

Self-surveillance: embodying aesthetic labour

The physical appearance of the performer can be understood to function as an important factor within training and industry. I will introduce the term 'aesthetic labour', thinking about how aesthetic labour processes characterise the industry before concentrating on the ArtsEd case study findings to examine how this condition is embedded within pedagogies at the school.

The concept of 'aesthetic labour' has proved useful in explorations of interactive service work (Warhurst et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 2001; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Pettinger, 2010). Drawing on Leidner's (2003) definition of the term, Thompson et al. (2001) assert that interactive service sector work involves face-to-face or voice-to-voice communication with clients, pointing out: "in interactive service work the employees, and the way they look, sound and act, *are themselves* part of the product" (p.930, italics in original). Used in this context, Warhust et al. (2001) define 'aesthetic labour' as

> a supply of 'embodied capacities and attributes possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment. Employers mobilize, develop and commodify these capacities and attributes through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into competencies or skills which are then aesthetically geared towards producing a 'style' of service encounter deliberately intended to appeal to the senses of customers, most obviously in visual or aural way. (p.931)

Within her engaging account of women performers, Dean asserts that this description clearly chimes with the non-service occupation of the performer: "an occupation where close specification of embodied aesthetic information for functional purposes, i.e. as a job requirement to attract the audience gaze, is a given" (2005: pp.761-762). In the industry, casting directors select or reject performers for first round auditions via their headshots and, for certain dance productions, a full body photograph is also required by the casting team at this stage. Dean notes (2005):

> In performing work the requirement for photographs is universal and accepted as necessary by all parties, indicating the unusual place overt discrimination based on appearance has in this area for both women and men. Indeed, the headquarters of the performers' union Equity displays advertising leaflets from a photography service highlighting its technology's ability to 'remove blemishes': an institutionalized example of the complicity of performer workers (and their representatives) in their aesthetic labour. (p.765)

Height requirements (in either the form of maximum or minimum height restrictions) are often noted on casting calls and there is an expectation for performers to dress suitably for the casting that they are attending or, alternatively, they may be asked to dress in a particular way to audition. Key decisions based on the appearance of performers continue to be made throughout the casting process. Drawing on the findings from ArtsEd supports an understanding as to how staff begin to prepare students to succeed within the discriminatory setting of the industry "the actor's appearance [becomes] a form of exchange" (Mitchell, 2014: p.60).

The notion of the quadruple threat, as interpreted by Chris Hocking, is apposite to this discussion. Whilst achieving triple threat status remains the current requirement and aim for the musical theatre student and graduate, the term continues to be expanded. In industry dialogues it is not uncommon for the term 'quadruple threat' to be used. Typical use of the phrase refers to a

performer who cannot only sing, dance and act, but to a practitioner who is also a musician (with the ability to play to Grade 8 standard or to a professional level). Principal of ArtsEd, Chris Hocking, however, offers a different interpretation of the term, asserting that the fourth strand is "what you look like" (interview, 17 June 2015). Hocking acknowledges his own recognition that this is an unethical issue; however, he presents a matter-of-fact front that conveys a resigned acceptance of the matter, insinuating that it is beyond the control of ArtsEd.

In my own experience of being an ArtsEd student, I witnessed changes to my own body: whilst I was slim prior to starting the course, just four weeks of training resulted in a significant loss of body fat and muscle gain. Managing one's body image was commonly mentioned by staff members: one teacher's corrections were laden with opinions about students' weight; we were encouraged to use self-tanning products; to wear make-up to classes; and, some students were advised to commit to a certain kind of image change, for example, a dramatic haircut and change of hair colour. Whilst training at the school between the years of 2005 and 2008, at least six women on the musical theatre course suffered with eating disorders, three of whom were in my year group. One female student became severely anorexic following graduation, and numerous others restricted or controlled their food intake in some form. On graduating, it was common to receive comments about my appearance. Amongst these, I remember being told on numerous occasions that I "look like an ArtsEd girl" and, once, I was 'reassured' by my agent's wife: "You're fine – see, you've gotta be a size 8 or below to get seen for leading lady jobs." I attended final stage 'auditions' which were little more than a visit to a costume store with a fellow auditionee to try on costumes for size.

The body, body image and appearance surfaced as central concepts during data analysis. Although referring to the body (and the mind) was very common throughout acting, singing, dancing and acting classes, the findings indicate that it is the dance pedagogies that place most emphasis on body image and appearance and these form the focus of the next part of the analysis. Considering body image, Sarah Grogan ([1999] 2008] explains:

> "[B]ody image is a psychological phenomenon that is significantly affected by social factors. … The image that an individual has of his or her body is largely determined by social experience. Body image is elastic and open to change through new information. … Research has suggested that most people have key reference groups that furnish social information relevant to body image. (p.4)

Grogan's assertions are particularly helpful in turning to think about ArtsEd and body image: the all-important significance of cultural context; the malleability of the concept (and, consequently, of the performer's perception of themselves); and recognising those in the training environment –staff and other students–as key reference groups and influencers of the individual student's body image can be recognised as critical factors shaping the performer's perception of their appearance.

> The heat is one of the first things to hit me as I enter Studio 201: the close atmosphere, a sudden contrast from the light and airy windowed corridor outside, encouraged by the closed windows and blinds. Quietly thanking Chris who has escorted me to the room and ensured there is a chair for me to sit on, I tense my muscles to control and quieten my movement so as not to distract the class as I lower myself onto the chair. I cross my legs to ensure my iPad and notebook are in an optimum position for writing whilst allowing me to watch the class without distracting those in it with jerky or large movements.
>
> Seventeen male students are taking David's first-year ballet class in the spacious second-floor studio and a pianist sits in the far corner of the room. Ballet barres run the length of four walls of the room and a portable barre is positioned in the centre of the space. The students wear fitted black Lycra dance shorts or leggings and, apart from a few who wear tight black t-shirts or vests, most of the men work bare-chested. David wears a vest, black dance trousers and dance trainers: he is around six feet tall, muscular, and has a commanding presence. The students' partial dressedness makes me feel almost overdressed, their movement stills all but my fingers, head and eyes. This class is the first of the day and has been underway for ten minutes: sweat runs down the faces, arms and backs of the trainees. Between exercises, David asks the students: "Do you go to the [college] gym? The gym tutor is a qualified nutritionist, you know? (…) I need to start seeing changes in your bodies. You want to work in this business, don't you? If I don't see changes in your bodies you're selling yourself short."
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October 2014)

The excerpt above was recorded during my first residency at ArtsEd: the first-year students were in their fourth week of training. David's comments communicate a need for the students to take actions to modify their bodies, implying that this is an essential step towards employment. This correlates with Roanna Mitchell's argument that the student's "aesthetic labour often requires maintenance through ongoing embodied practices" (2014, p.62). In her study, 'Body Image in the Dance Class' (2008), Wendy Oliver examines the cultural expectation that young people should submit to a certain physical appearance. Oliver draws on the encounters of two ballet dancers who were told by their company directors to lose weight: one of the ballerinas, Heidi Guenther, went on to develop an eating disorder and died, aged twenty-three, from heart failure, and the other dancer, Gelsey Kirkland, experienced–alongside a successful career–anorexia, numerous plastic surgeries, and drug addiction (2008: p.21). Whilst these may be extreme examples of negative body image, the descriptions of these episodes make clear the seriousness of body image issues in the dance world. Oliver calls attention to the relationships between dancers and their teachers, mentors, and those in positions of authority, raising questions about influence, responsibility, and control. Furthermore, quoting Anna-Marie Holmes, director of the Boston Ballet, Oliver highlights the significance of ballet as a visual art, a characteristic that, in Holmes' view, grants her the right to "advise what looks good" (Zernike in Oliver, 2008: p.21). Musical theatre, too, can be recognised as a visual art: by thinking of it as such, important ethical matters are accentuated. Using the arguments of Oliver (2008) and Russell, I will draw attention to the culture of observation–and by this I pertain to being watched and to watching one's self–that pervades the megamusical system and dance training, considering how this is both reflected and challenged in the context of the training at ArtsEd.

Audience members go to "watch" or "see" a musical, performers talk about themselves and agents talk about their clients "being seen" for a role, and the performer's career is permeated with comments, opinions, notes and reviews about their work. The performer must be prepared for their performances to be constantly scrutinised. The practice of note-giving used within the megamusical system is exhaustive: Russell asserts that a principal performer might receive up to ten sets of notes to be applied at their next performance (2007: p.100). Pointing out that "[n]ote-giving and rehearsals are part of a theatre career" (2007: ibid.), Russell argues that these practices can have grave ramifications for the performer:

> Constant correction and criticism becomes numbing, debilitating, and demoralizing. As a result, the actors begin to depend upon ten sets of outside eyes for their

> identity. Some actors give up their individuality willingly, some unknowingly, and some just to keep their job. (p.100)

Both Russell and Oliver draw on Foucault's (1979) book *Discipline and Punish* to further consider the specific form of practice that the megamusical dictates and dance training, respectively. Russell (2007) explains:

> *Phantom* illuminates an artistic juncture where performance is rooted in disciplined movement resulting from and precipitated by hours of surveillance. Through rehearsals and performance practice, *Phantom's* 'docile bodies' are taught by the management to develop an interior critical eye, and this interior eye acts as a Foucauldian panopticon moving from observation to punishment and back again (Foucault 1979). This panopticon, set in motion by the management's checks and balances, acts as a 24-hour warden…. This warden is ever on surveillance and moves around the artist offering unlimited opportunities of self-discipline that reinforce the management's checks and balances, even when the artist is not in the theatre. (p.101)

Footnotes clarify that "the 'docile' body is created through a physical 'mechanics of power' that 'explore[s] it, breaks it down, and rearranges it'" and "[t]he panapticon is a system of power where 'the codified power to punish turns into a disciplinary power to observe'" (Foucault in Russell, 2007: ibid.). Interestingly, clear parallels can be drawn between Foucault's description of the docile body and the 'breaking' method used in some training programmes, outlined earlier in the chapter. Focusing on the use of mirrors, Oliver employs Jill Green's (2002-2003) analysis of the dance class, in which she suggests that the students' bodies are docile bodies, to emphasise the culture of surveillance to which dancers belong (2008, p.22). Russell, too, turns to dance, specifically ballet, tracing "a danger within an art form where mirrors, repetition, and replication are part of an overarching methodology" and asking "how […] an artist trained in an art form that is based on 'individuality' reacts to a new methodology that forces the body into 'complacent reflection', repetition, and replication?" (2007: p.102). In their work, Russell and Oliver make vital connections between certain rehearsal and performance practices, ethics, and questions of power, authority and conformation, and begin to consider how the performer's own perception of their body and performance practice can be affected by particular ways of working. These topics are especially useful in analysing the methods used in the training at ArtsEd.

Oliver outlines four kinds of conditions that can be understood to contribute towards a negative body image in the dance class: a competitive environment; negative comments from the teacher about students' bodies; tight-fitting dance clothes; and the continual use of mirrors (2008: p.24). Turning to ArtsEd, the data shows that each of these conditions are common factors present within training. However, in contextualising these elements a number of counterpoints can be found. Exploring these aspects of the musical theatre training at ArtsEd, this research presents evidence that complexifies superficial interpretations of performer training, supporting an original and nuanced picture of a process that has evolved over the last fifteen years.

A competitive environment is the first feature identified by Oliver (ibid., p.24). Musical theatre is a highly competitive industry: performers spend a vast amount of time competing to secure work. As indicated earlier in the chapter, for some West End productions it is not unusual to be expected to attend up to ten rounds of auditions before being offered, or denied, a contract. Despite the cut-throat nature of the industry, the students at ArtsEd demonstrate close companionship and a sense of supportiveness for their fellow students. Whilst, at times, the students are set up to compete against each other–for example, in audition classes or processes to cast third year productions–a spirit of collegiality between students is consistently encouraged by the staff. Class groups develop particularly strong group identities.

Turning to the second of the two areas significantly impacted by the culture of observation – in dance classes, teachers made candid comments to students about their bodies on a daily basis. Although the bluntness of some of the utterances communicated by staff might appear to be abrupt in nature to an outsider, within the content of these statements there was a predominant emphasis on the need for students to develop strength, technique and a comprehensive understanding of their bodies. Frequently, comments about weaknesses in students' bodies or a lack of understanding of their anatomies were offset by a compliment or clarification to reassure the students as to the intention of the note being given:

> "You've got really nice ballet legs; you need to find an understanding of them." (David)

> David asks the students to notice their thighs wobbling as a result of performing a *battement frappe*, explaining: "Not that you're chubby or anything, it's just unused muscle."
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October 2014)

The unequivocal messages communicated from staff members to students were delivered with a sincere quality – an attribute which Rory Foster (2010) argues is essential in creating a successful dance teacher:

> Sincerity in your teaching and the rapport that you develop with each student are the building blocks of trust that must exist within the foundation of every student's training. Students […] have an uncanny ability to sense when a teacher is not being sincere. And if that should happen, you risk losing their respect and possibly even control of your class. (p.98)

Later in the chapter, I will return to build on the constructive strategies used by staff members in their teaching. The third condition outlined by Oliver – tight-fitting dance clothes – is also evidenced at ArtsEd: in ballet and jazz classes, female students are required to wear leotards or crop tops and short, form-fitting dance shorts and male students must wear dance shorts or leggings and an optional tight vest. It can be argued that this regulatory dance wear is entirely necessary; it is critical that the teachers are able to clearly and easily see the students' bodies to ensure that they are executing exercises safely and correctly. The dress code for dance classes becomes a little more relaxed when the students reach the third year, corresponding with an expectation that the trainees will have technically progressed and acquired a sound understanding of correct physical placement and technique.

The final feature described by Oliver is the continuous use of mirrors in training (2008: p.24). Mirrors have been used as a teaching tool in westernized dance classes for a long time (Radell et al., 2014: p.161) and the advantages and disadvantages of mirror use in the studio, proposals detailing how the mirror can be used effectively in the classroom, and dance students' experiences of working with mirrors, have been studied by numerous scholars in recent years[7]. Mirrors are used in all dance classes at ArtsEd, with the exception of one third-year jazz class, which takes place in an acting studio. The experience and awareness of the dance teachers is

[7] Thes studies include: Diehl (2016); Radell et al. (2002, 2003, 2004, 2011, 2014); Ehrenberg (2010) Foster (2010) Dearborn et al. (2006, 2011); Dearborn and Ross (2006); Buckroyd (2000); and Green (1999).

reflected in their teaching practices: staff members often ask students to work facing away from the mirrors and, particularly importantly, there is a firm emphasis on somatics. I use the term 'somatics' here drawing on Jill Green's (2002) perspective on the concept, in which she builds on Hanna's [1988] definition of the term to explore somatic knowledge as content and methodology in dance and arts education. At ArtsEd, the staff consistently use imagery, breath and reinforce and encourage the student to consider herself from the "inside out, where one is aware of feelings, movements and intentions, rather than looking objectively from the outside in" (Hanna, 1988: p.20). This approach is not limited to dance classes, but is evidenced across the curriculum in acting, voice, physical theatre and acting through song classes, singing technique and repertoire lessons, and in third year production rehearsals. This modus operandi can be understood to counter one of the ways in which the mirror has been problematised, that is, is in its capacity to induce body objectification, leading to the possibility of stunted proprioceptive feedback for the student (Oliver, 2008: p22). Conversely, there are instances at ArtsEd in which the trainee's body is commodified, objectified or problematised.

References to the student's body as a marketable commodity were made by some ArtsEd staff members: "This [body] is what we're paying to see, don't be afraid to show it" (Greenall, ArtsEd, October 2014). This example, along with other remarks of this nature, prompt important questions regarding the power that the industry has over training. Instead of preparing the trainee to accept these discriminatory practices, how might training challenge and change them? Underscoring the surveillance culture into which the student is inducted, the data shows occasions in which slender students, usually female, tug at their skin as they observe themselves in the mirror: one can only assume that they are dissatisfied with what they see. In both her capacity to become a commodifiable object and to suffer body image issues, the notion of vulnerability emerges. In the following section, the role and significance of the concept of vulnerability in the training at ArtsEd is illuminated.

The vulnerable performer

Considering the impact of power distribution in actor training, Evi Stamatiou (2015) highlights the vulnerable position in which trainees are placed:

> [I]n the moment of study, they do not know whether they will get work. They exchange their present work time and money for training just for the possibility of

> work. They are in a place of vulnerability. Their time spent in Drama School is time invested in the commodity of knowledge. (pp. 9-10)

I suggest that, at ArtsEd, a number of factors contribute to making the student vulnerable and that this appears to be a necessary characteristic for the student to embody, both as a personality trait and, often, in their staged performances. In the first year, emphasis is placed upon the trainees' lack of bodily knowledge and understanding, on making students aware of their habits as individuals (if these are recognised as shortcomings), on shaping their work ethic and attitudes, and on the student developing strong, grounded technique. These factors point towards the first years being separated from their former lives and learning, making clear the need for them need to work hard to make changes as they adapt to their new environment and the goals. There is little doubt that, in all first-year classes but, in dance classes particularly, students are required to take on the characteristics of the neophyte as described by Victor Turner (1969):

> Their behaviour is normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructors implicitly, and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint. It is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life. (p.95)

Turner's description of the neophyte is reminiscent of Meyer-Dinkgrafe's explanation of the 'breaking' process. The data suggests that teachers expect students to work to conform to a certain level of physical uniformity in dance classes: "I expect you to be the same as everybody else, not different. Otherwise, you won't be able to work in a group and they'll say 'she can't do it' – you'll stand out as being different" (Doling, ArtsEd, October 2014). A broad range of abilities at entry level means that achieving this level of sameness is more challenging for some trainees than other: some students arrive without any technique (having never had any formal dance training); others have poor technique due to unsatisfactory teaching; and some begin training with a solid and advanced technical grounding. The need for this physical precision appears to be justifiable when one considers that, for optimum chances of employment, performers must be versatile enough to adapt and respond to the differing stylistic requirements of choreographers. Furthermore, many students will be cast in a megamusical at some point in their career and, as I describe in Chapter Three, a crucial component of their work will involve working with others to closely replicate an original production. The performer who has an acute eye for detail and is able to quickly and accurately pick up and present material is considered to

be a markedly valuable member of a company, as they have the potential to take on the role of a 'swing'[8], or to be cast as an ensemble member understudying a number of roles.

At this early stage in their training, the staff member takes on the role of the guru, however, the pedagogy cannot be wholly defined as a one-way process through which the trainer passes on knowledge to the trainee (Stamatiou, 2015: 7): there is evidence that the teachers, at times, incorporate the values within critical pedagogy, that is, a process in which power between teacher and student is reciprocal – the trainer framing questions that will support the trainee to find solutions (ibid., p.7). This power balance in the teacher-student relationship can be seen, clearly but gradually, to shift as the student progresses through her training. Nonetheless, the findings make clear that, in the first year particularly, the ArtsEd student must be subservient to the teacher, exercising unquestioning acceptance of all comments and corrections. This requirement applies to each and every trainee, regardless of her position on the (initially) wide spectrum of technical ability. Reflecting the top-down approach which governs the industry, the development of a conformist disposition appears to have become a crucial component of musical theatre training – as important as the technical and performance skills that are frequently considered as the main purpose of training. The requirement for the performer to conform on demand provokes questions about the ethical implications of this condition and how it is addressed within training. Alongside other factors (which I will explore in this section), this can be understood to make the practitioner vulnerable: here I will investigate how this significant condition is addressed in the training at ArtsEd.

The findings which emerge from the analysis include an increase in staff observations (of peers and students); a commitment to enabling students through a supportive, somatic approach; and a clear commitment to mental health awareness. lluminating shifting pedagogical approaches, these features indicate a progressive ideology of training and evidencing a growing awareness of the criticality of understanding and addressing the ethical dimension of training. However, tensions characterise these changes and I will draw on the work of Alison E. Robb and Clemence Due (2017), Ross Prior, Ian Maxwell, Mariana Szabo and Mark Seton (2015) and Seton (2010; 2012) to examine these more closely. These studies are particularly important as they foreground the matter of ethics in performer training. While their scholarship is based within an Australian training context and focuses on actor training, all have addressed the significance of the

[8] The swing can be employed in either an 'offstage' or 'onstage' capacity. She is a performer who learns multiple performers' tracks and is expected to be ready to perform any one of these, often with very little notice.

psychological wellbeing of trainees and of the complex, affective relationships between staff and students.

Prior, et al. (2015) draw attention to the work of integrative psychologist, David Petherbridge, and his consideration of "the tension between the needs of the institution in relation to industry and the needs of the student with regard to wellbeing and responsible care". Students are not only vulnerable in the studio – regarding the experience for new trainees, Petherbridge claims that vocational training places additional pressures upon students (Petherbridge in Seton et al., 2012):

> They are learning how to leave home, move to a new city, live in and manage shared accommodation, and forming first sexual relationships. They may be doing all of these things for the first time as well as embarking on an incredibly intense actor training programme. (unpaginated)

It is likely that any student facing a new learning environment will be presented with challenges, be they social, cultural, intellectual, and/or geographical. High expectations are placed on new ArtsEd musical theatre students as they begin training and they, too, must deal with these trials. This aside, the training process is not solely about learning and honing technique, but is a journey of self-discovery; from the outset, the physical and mental faculties of the students are constantly challenged. Unlike many performance degree courses at universities, for which students may have around ten compulsory contact hours per week, ArtsEd musical theatre students have an average of twenty-five compulsory classes timetabled each week. As evidenced in Chapter 3, trainees are also expected to rehearse around these hours, resulting in an all-consuming commitment to training from the hours of around 8:00am until 8:00pm, five days a week (with many students returning to use studio spaces on Saturdays). One of the factors that can be understood to contribute to the intensity of training mentioned by Petherbridge (cited above) is a consistently full timetable. Studying the perceptions of acting students and their trainers, Robb and Due (2017) identify the intense nature of the conservatoire as having a negative impact on students' psychological wellbeing, the consequences of which are stress (resulting in a knock-on effect on physical health) and a considerable impact on trainees' relationships with others outside the course (p.303). For the students interviewed by Robb and Due, the physical side effects of the stress from the unusually high workload within training led to "missed classes and a feeling of falling further behind" (ibid.). At ArtsEd, it is extremely rare for students to miss classes: students are required to attend every timetabled class, working through injury and stress with the support of their teachers unless they have express permission

from a staff member to watch the class or attend a physiotherapy appointment. Intensity can also be understood to be manifested through the complex relationships formed in the training environment. Robb and Due (2017) and Seton (2010) both engage with this idea in some depth: delineating the findings at ArtsEd I build on their arguments, proposing that these intense, human relationships are at the heart of training.

Seton's exploration of the relationships between teachers and students in vocational training reinforces the significance and uniqueness of these human connections. In his paper, 'The ethics of embodiment: actor training and habitual vulnerability' (2010: pp.5-20), Seton shares the findings of his studies into actor training[9]. The issues discovered by Seton within the training environment centre upon discourses of training, embodiment, vulnerability and inter-corporeality. Although not engaging explicitly with the concept of 'breaking', the notions arising from Seton's work suggest that there is a significant amount of crossover occurring between Seton's discoveries and those which transpire from the ethical segment of the ArtsEd case study: themes relating to vulnerability, discourse and, particularly importantly, the way in which teachers and students "profoundly *form* each other and are *formed* by each other, through their embodied interactions, within the institutional processes of [actor] training" (Seton, 2010: p.6, italics in original).

Robb and Due's findings are grouped into three domains of experience: "the conservatoire (environmental/cultural factors), acting training (process factors) and student qualities (individual factors)" (2017: p.297). As with Seton's study, resonances can be found between a number of these findings and the ArtsEd case study results. Clear intersections of congruence, however, are counteracted by the evidence of additional features at ArtsEd and it would be a mistake to assume that musical theatre training can be understood solely through Seton's and Robb and Due's lenses. Some of these features are generic and some particular: the specificity of musical theatre gives rise to certain attributes, whilst institutional characteristics and the idiosyncrasies of staff members shape others.

Considering ethics pertinent to actor training and post-training work practices, Seton provides three responses to support an awareness of the impactful reciprocity between the performing body of the students and the witnessing and shaping body of the teacher (2010: p.15). These are entitled: "1. Conversation: Performing meaning-making and knowledge creation together"; 2.

[9] Seton chooses not to identify the names of the three institutions at which he conducted his research.

Experience: Honouring a diversity of dispositions through phenomenological practices of embodied perception"; and 3. Embodiment: Becoming response-able in the formation and sustainability of vulnerable bodies" (Seton, 2010: pp.15-18). It is these three responses that I will use as a platform, summarising Seton's deductions before investigating specific points germane to findings at ArtsEd and furthering the conclusions of Seton and Robb and Due to incorporate the distinctive features of the musical theatre training at ArtsEd.

1(a): Seton problematises both what is said and what is not said within the training environments he has studied. He raises a concern that teaching is shaped around the practical, leaving little room for discussions about the "process of working together"; when the space for conversation arises, it is focused towards discovering the correct answer as opposed to allowing for a variety of results to be investigated. (2010: p.15)

1(b): The use of admonitions by teachers, instructing 'doing without thinking', leads to an understanding that is based upon Cartesian dualism. Seton labels this as "a misrecognition – once more splitting consciousness from embodiment" (2010: p.15).

1(c): Teachers have voiced their concerns regarding his proposal for the development of a practice that embraces conversation and necessitates "a willingness to live with anxiety and trust" (Fonesca in Seton, 2010: p.15) as this may "undermine their authority, and therefore harm their effectiveness as teachers in equipping students with skills for employment in the industry" (Seton, 2010: p.15).

2: Seton suggests a further misrecognition in the way in which the production of talent is perceived (2010):

> I believe that any meanings and recognitions of ability or talent are produced as a consequence of interactions *between* participants, rather than being misrecognized as *residing only in the body* of one or another of the participants. In recognizing performance as meaning-making together, assessment then becomes a process of suspending judgment and remaining open to what is offered, alongside determining what is recognized and produced *in-between.* (p.15, italics in original)

> As a solution, Seton asserts that utilising a particular set of questions delineated by Shaw (2002: p.172) as an opening up method may be beneficial, "inviting stakeholders to consider the arbitrariness of the habits of knowing and legitimizing a person's performance" (2010: p.16).
>
> 'Who are we realizing we are as we gather here?'
> 'What kind of sense are we making together?'
> 'What are we coming to talk about as we converse?'
> 'How are we shifting our understanding of what we are engaged in?' 'What kind of enterprise are we shaping?'

3: Seton's ultimate concern lies in the need for a substantial shift in the accountability between teachers and students in training; "a response to the extraordinary potential [actor] training has to profoundly affect students" (2010: p.16, my brackets).

A heavy weighting on practice is a notable characteristic of vocational study. Seton, however, does not take issue with the amount of practice but with the lack of conversation about practice (within the training curriculum). On a logistical level and, as previously discussed in Chapter 3, the 'battle' against time is a constant pressure in the training environment. The disciplinary breadth of musical theatre complicates this temporal factor: trainees aim to become technical experts in each of the three disciplines of musical theatre and hone their ability to seamlessly move between each. As a result, the curriculum is vast and time always precious. In dance classes at ArtsEd, there is indeed evidence that conversation is limited to pinpointing the response that the teacher is expecting from the student. This reaction, however, cannot be generalised, and warrants further consideration as well as being set in a clear context. First, it is crucial to recognise the disciplinary specificity of dance (in comparison to that of acting, which Seton considers). Whilst the dominating voice in the dance studio it that of the teacher, a constant exchange of knowledge can be witnessed in the form of non-verbal communication (both of the student and of the teacher). Reinforcing the somatic approach discussed earlier in the chapter, this method encourages the student to "become sensitive to the inner messages of the body […] in order to most effectively communicate movement" (Green, 2002: p.115). This approach does not limit mental work, instead the body is used as a source of knowledge through which thinking is articulated corporeally. Despite this, the pressure of time during the working day can be recognised to limit potentially valuable conversations between students and staff and students and their peers.

Seton and Prior et al. highlight the teacher's use of certain types of admonitions: those used to curb thinking and talking about a practice-based task and call for the trainee to 'do' immediately (Seton, 2010: p.15-16); and those described as "professional entertainment maxims […] – 'the show must go on'; whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger'; 'survival of the fittest' (Prior et al., 2015: p.64). These warnings are, at times, reflected by staff members at ArtsEd:

> Don't analyse, just do it.
>
> In your own time...stop practising when you're perfect.
>
> And when it really starts to ache and you'd rather put needle through your kneecap, that's when you need to smile and enjoy it.
>
> (ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, October 2014)

However, I suggest that Seton's problematisation of the first kind of caution is countered in the training at ArtEd by the somatic approach which is embedded in the curriculum. Furthermore, encouraging either the student to respond promptly to instructions or to learn through practice this advice might be understood to support the student who is prone to overthinking or who is struggling to be rid of problematic habits, both of which can stifle the development of effective practice; and encourage unbroken focus, self-trust and trust between student and teacher – in Chapter 3 I assert that focus and trust are two of 'the seven standards' that feature as crucial qualities in the developmental process to become a triple threat performer. In addition, the trainee is preparing to enter a profession characterised by practice: be it in auditions, the rehearsal room or employed in a performance contract she will consistently be expected to perform on demand, quickly processing verbal notes and communicating her understanding of these in practice using the material (text and movement) of others (playwrights, librettists and choreographers).

Complexifying the aforementioned somatic principles and industry characteristics is the second category of admonition. These precepts reflect the ethos of the industry and are bound up with the notions of resilience, replaceability and unshakeable dedication: "The show must go on" (Prior et al., 2015: p.64). Prior questions whether the use of sayings such as this "may actually be doing more harm than good" (2015: p.64), a point with which I concur. Along with Prior (ibid.), my concern lies in how the constant reinforcement of such cautions, which encourage the

performer to accept and deflect from problems that she encounters and demonstrate dogged resilience in order to protect her reputation, might put her at risk of psychological and physical harm. This trait is not exclusive to the studio space, but can be witnessed throughout the training environment and in the performance industry. It is an attitude modelled by teaching staff and mirrored by students. What, then, is the rationale behind using these precepts, and are there any benefits in applying them? Like the first kind of admonition, they can be understood as drivers of practice, discipline, a singular focus and a strong work ethic, each of these factors contributing towards the trainee becoming an expert practitioner. As I have already suggested, these tenets accustomise the student to industry attitudes. However, I argue that, while it is important to prepare the musical theatre student for the challenges and realities of the industry, to dogmatically inculcate trainees with these beliefs triggers problematic consequences for the trainee, teacher, training system and industry. Drawing attention to the limited and, potentially, limiting discourse evidenced in the training settings in which he observed, Seton notes that when opportunities for conversation arose these "were oriented towards finding the right answer rather than interacting with a potential multiplicity of outcomes" (2010: p.15). Pointing out that the process of actor training requires performers to be critical thinkers in regard to the material they perform, he suggests that trainees should also "be encouraged to be critically aware of the embodiments of the discourses by which they are in-formed as embodied persons" (Seton, 2010: p.15): an approach which I firmly agree would benefit training performers.

The specificity of the ethical challenges within vocational training continues to be speculated upon by those outside its realm. The training process is "an ethical matter because it shapes embodiment in profound and often unsustainable ways" (Seton, 2010: 8). If this is the case, it is crucial to find ways through which to gain insight into current practices and better understand what training institutions are doing to develop more sustainable pathways for their trainees and graduates. Context plays a key role here; training cannot be understood through isolated terms as it is constructed and experienced through bodies, voices, emotions and interaction. Augmenting the existing contextual picture of the training at ArtsEd, in the final section of this chapter I explain how training is beginning to shift its practices to incorporate a more holistic approach.

Embodying ethics

The talent and skill of the triple threat performer may pull focus, but these components are anchored within complex internalised and individualised systems that house a performer's

training and psyche. "As audiences, we benefit that (…) actors are willing to endure a career of instability to provide a wealth of enjoyment and cultural enrichment for us" (Thomson and Jaque, 2012: p.367). It is crucial, then, that training practices are ethically sound, and those who are trainers must recognise that they are shaping vulnerable minds and bodies to enter a precarious vocation.

The staff of the ArtsEd Musical Theatre course employ a significant number of pedagogical and personal strategies that counter the problematic portrayal of a harsh, rigid and uncompromising image of training. Whilst there is evidence to suggest that, at times, teachers may be identified as didactic, all-knowing guru figures in training, these elements are balanced by approaches which support a training programme with a developing ethical conscience. One example of this can be found in the formal teaching observations which have been embedded in the course. On a number of occasions during my fieldwork, I witnessed teachers carried out observations of their colleagues' teaching, offering a shared learning opportunity for both observer and observed. Informal observations are also frequent: passing teachers regularly stop at the studio doorway during classes and quietly observe lessons. This increase in observations aligns with the development of a greater degree of transparency and accountability regarding teaching methods. Furthermore, evidence of the ArtsEd's commitment to mental health awareness, health and action was formally recognised in 2019 when the school was awarded with an Industry Minds award. Themes developed through this research evidence a distinct move towards more ethical approaches: these changes have correlated with ArtsEd's fast-growing reputation and success as a prolific triple threat training institution and are a result of a process of formalisation, staff changes, and staff and course development. The analogy of the 'ArtsEd family' (Hocking, 2015) permeates the training culture, reverberating through pedagogies, buildings, bodies and minds.

Seton's proposal relates to how critical embodiment might function within the training institution in the future and become a significant factor contributing towards progressive ethical changes in training. In this thesis, the future is addressed through a close analysis of the past and present: the *Curated Interfaces* investigate how graduates of training embody the mental and somatic impact of their ArtsEd training; and, in this chapter, I have traced specific characteristics within training and industry ideologies to question these from an ethical perspective. In doing so, I have addressed an important aspect of this growing area of research. Asking whether these training systems silence performers, I have argued not only for the importance of ethically sound processes within *future* training systems, but for the value in recovering, unpacking and

documenting a selection of experiences that appear to be lost to the *past*. It is through exploring these dynamic experiences that an increased understanding of the specificities, impact and effects of triple threat training and the complexities of the triple threat performer's labour is gained.

CURATED INTERFACE (4) | *Someday Just Began: a documented installation*

> Assemblages -- performance and document -- are inevitably partial.
> Rooted in uncertainty, they all require acts of interpretation. And there is no
> end to what can be said about them, to how they might be interpreted…
> There is never a complete and definitive picture.
> (Pearson and Shanks 2001: p.56)

The documentation within this interface serves as a surrogate for the live experience of an interactive installation, Someday Just Began (from hereon SJB). In the four earlier performances of the installation, spectators were invited to become interactive participants: presented here in an alternative form, I build on earlier versions of the work. Previously unseen pieces of documentation from (and) around the four past performances are woven through the installation guide and each exhibit is re-presented in a textual, pictorial, audio and/or audiovisual form. In addition, important questions arising from the process of producing the installation in various settings are addressed. The training process is displaced, reimagined, materialised, memorialised.

This performative interface between reader and documentation homes in on the experiential journey of my fieldwork. Fusing personal archival material with auto/ethnographic evidence and participants' responses, experiences, memories and documentation are re-performed, reflecting two objectives from early within the research process: to investigate a need to deal with both new and existing relationships and findings from the field but also to negotiate my own identity as performer, researcher, and now (then), curator. Framing this blurriness between my own history as a triple threat trainee and the insights obtained as a researcher at ArtsEd results in a performance of curated fragments. It allows an insight into a hidden process that precedes many performers' careers and into a history that remains etched on the body and mind long after training is completed.

You, the reader, are invited to engage with the documentation: to explore how we can breathe new life into documents and objects through our interaction with them; to investigate corporeal memory in practice; to consider how encountering material in an alternative form–juxtaposing digital files, ephemera and bodies in/as live performance–offers a different understanding to that of a formal paper; and in an attempt to get 'closer' to (understanding) training by experiencing it in this way. You are welcome to bring whatever you wish to this experience.

AN INVITATION

> Dear Janine,
>
> Firstly, congratulations on being accepted to present your work at the TapRA Postgraduate Symposium. We really enjoyed reading your proposal and are very interested to hear more about you research. …
>
> We wondered if, rather than giving us a formal paper, your work could become part of the usual lunchtime offering. In the past we've had an 'Artist in Residence' present their work in the lunchtime slot … It struck us that your work could take on this role at this year's symposium[.] … Particularly with its performative aspects, we thought there may be a way of using your research to form an exhibition[.] …
>
> Do you think this more interactive research presentation would be something you might be able to produce?
>
> David
>
> (Coates, 2015)

The opportunity to create an exhibition arrives in the form of an email in January 2015. A fruitful conversation with my supervisor allows me to recognise the timeliness of this offer. I have been working to clarify how the practice element of my inquiry will be represented in the work, and this invitation offers an opportunity to ruminate over the presentational challenges I am encountering. I am unaware at the time that this was to become the first of four live performances of an interactive installation and a vital component of my study, reifying and nuancing the performer-training-industry loop.

The first performance of the work is presented at the TaPRA Postgraduate Symposium, 'People and Processes: Behind the Scenes of Theatre and Performance' (University of Manchester, 7 February 2015), the second performance at the STR New Researchers Network's Symposium, "Dumb objects, spoken for"? On Performance Archives and Documentation (The Shard, London, 19 June 2015), and the third performance at the 'Performing the Archives' Conference (NUI Galway, 23 July 2015). Following the presentation at the STR NRN Symposium, I am contacted by Helen Gush, Assistant Curator at the V&A Museum, London, and invited to recreate the installation on 16 April 2016 as part of the museum's Festival for Theatre and Performance.

MANCHESTER: Research diary entry, 23rd January 2015

It is just over a week before I am to present my exhibition at the TaPRA Postgraduate Symposium in Manchester. Guide sheets and a floor plan have been designed and will be printed next week, and the long-time amateur calligrapher in me has found enjoyment in carefully handwriting each colour-coded exhibition label and table sign. The audiovisual footage for the *Corridor-Class∞* exhibit has been cut and edited and I am wondering whether I, as the live performer in Exhibit 3.2, *Performance Space*, should be rehearsing in preparation to perform. That is, after all, what I am trained to do. "Amateurs practice until they get it right, professionals practice until they can't get it wrong" (unknown). And yet, one of the objectives for this piece of practice is to allow myself to get it wrong. I am interested in how my heart, body and mind will respond in the moment of performance: in how my embodied training may or may not manifest itself, in my own enfleshed knowledge (Spry, 2001).

AN (ABRIDGED) INSTALLATION GUIDE:

This is Someday Just Began: Meeting, Making and Mounting Memories in the Field.

Figure 21: Publicity photograph chosen by the V&A Museum, London for *SJB* (2016). Janine and Ellie dancing in Christmas Jazz class at ArtsEd, London (2007). (Source: Personal collection).

This document will guide you through the interactive installation. Please begin by following the yellow tape arrows…

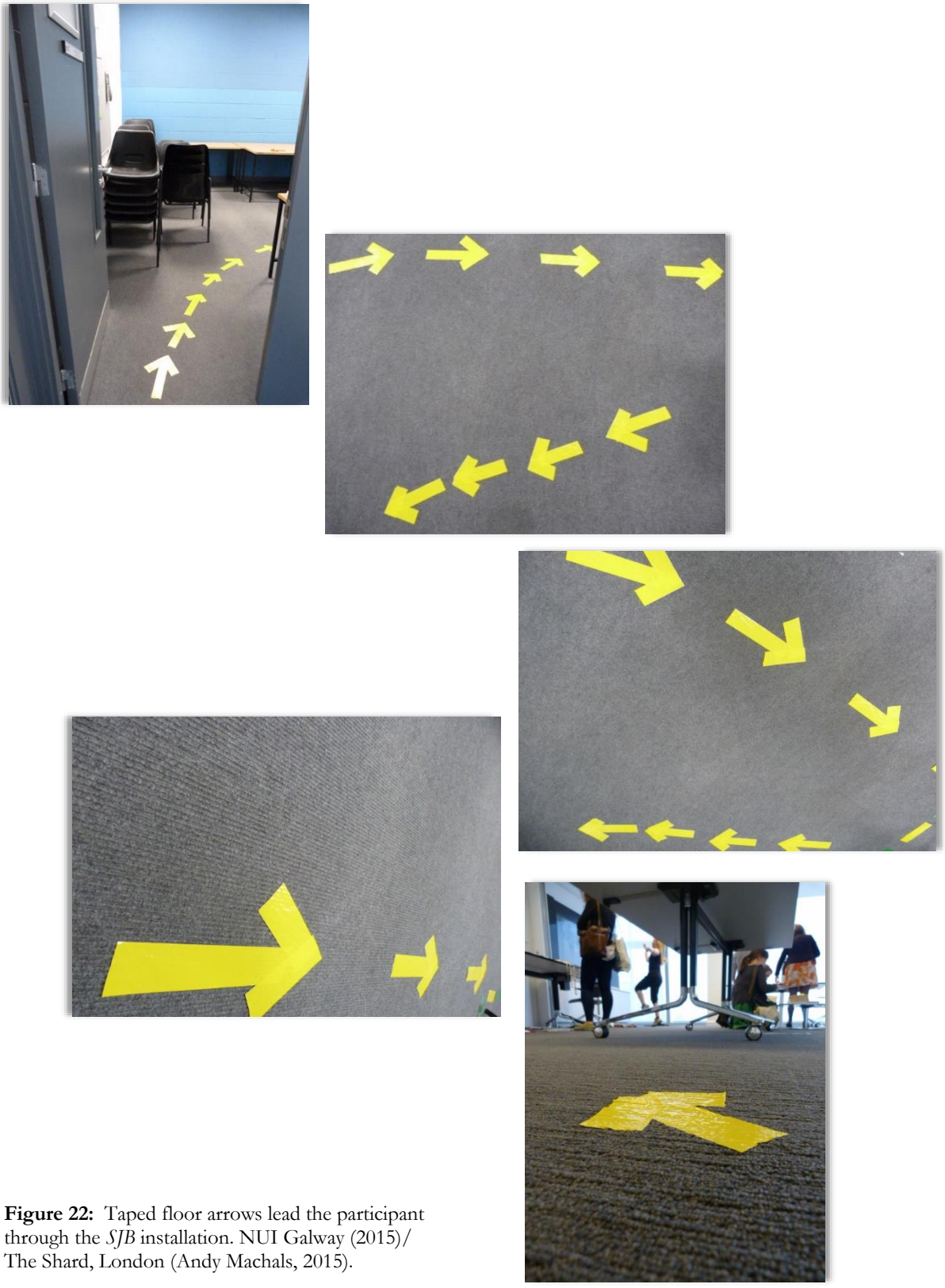


Figure 22: Taped floor arrows lead the participant through the *SJB* installation. NUI Galway (2015)/ The Shard, London (Andy Machals, 2015).

The floor you see is covered in mid-grey, ribbed pile carpet. It looks practical and neutral but it is surprisingly comfortable and satisfying to sit on. Sometimes, this arrowed floor is carpeted with dark grey ribbed pile, or covered in speckled pale grey vinyl, or is a plain pale grey rubber grid.

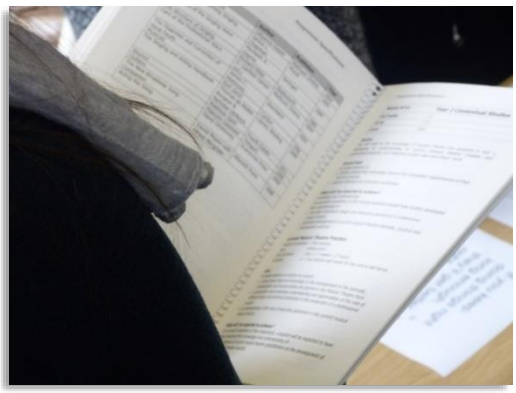
On first glance, the acid yellow arrows are neat and clear as they direct you, but you may notice that a few are symmetrically challenged and that the distance between each symbol is a little irregular. These irregularities reflect a temporal challenge that has surfaced during the set-up period each time the installation has been presented, resulting in a sense of urgency that has overridden my perfectionist tendencies. The arrows lead you to the…

- Green table / Fieldwork / Present

Figures 23 & 24: The Green table / Fieldwork /Present at *SJB*, University of Manchester (2015).

Exhibit 1
ArtsEd Student Handbook

Book
2014/2015



The *ArtsEd Student Handbook* (2014/2015) is a spiral-bound document, 160 pages in length. It "has been designed to help you understand, and get the most out of, the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre Programme" (Hocking, 2014: para. 1).

The handbook is referred to only once during my fieldwork residencies at ArtsEd: a student brings the document to an Acting class in response to a task that requires the trainees to share something they have found that is "missing". The student has noted an error in the handbook: a sentence that has some missing text and jumbled words, resulting in the sentence having quite a different meaning.

Typing errors aside, the handbook provides clear, detailed information about the staff and their roles, the school rules, the day-to-day running of the school, programme specifications, assessment criteria and "Other Official Information" (ArtsEd, 2014).

"There is more dance on the programme than I would have thought."

(*SJB* participant)

Figures 25: *SJB* participants interact with Exhibit 1, *ArtsEd Student Handbook*. (2015).

Please engage with Audiovisual Track 3 now:
Audiovisual montage created for *Someday Just Began: an interactive/documented installation*. Material: ArtsEd, London, 2014/2015.

Exhibit 1.1

"If you lived our lives you'd feel the same,
In your hearts, too, would burn such a flame."

Audiovisual montage

October/November 2014

This material, collected during a fieldwork residency at ArtsEd, London, reveals a selection of current ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre students. After being granted rare access to film and photograph classes and rehearsals, images and clips have been assembled in an attempt to draw the spectator into the day-to-day training environment experienced by first and second year students at the school. Photographs of third year public productions (performed in November 2014 and January 2015) intersect the material, illustrating both the visual contrast between process and performance and the shift from private to public performance sphere to which students aspire.

Figures 26: *SJB* participants interact with Exhibit 1, *ArtsEd Student Handbook*. (2015).

"Makes manifest the hard graft! And brings it alive through movement and song in a really appropriate and useful way."

(*SJB* participant)

I am interested in creating a sense of motion through this montage: moving images; bodies; voices; spaces; disciplines; and energies. Emplacing the ArtsEd musical theatre performer within the training environment (by digital means), the content aims to draw you in to a performance of training labour. The material evidences dimensions of the aims and claims documented within the Student Handbook–technique, discipline, various types of learning and different methods of teaching, collaboration–and layers audio and visual content from across the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course in the hope of beginning to capture the unique sensory environment of training.

Exhibit 1.2
MTivation

Posters (x4)
Reproduction of posters displayed on a dance studio wall and noticeboards at ArtsEd.

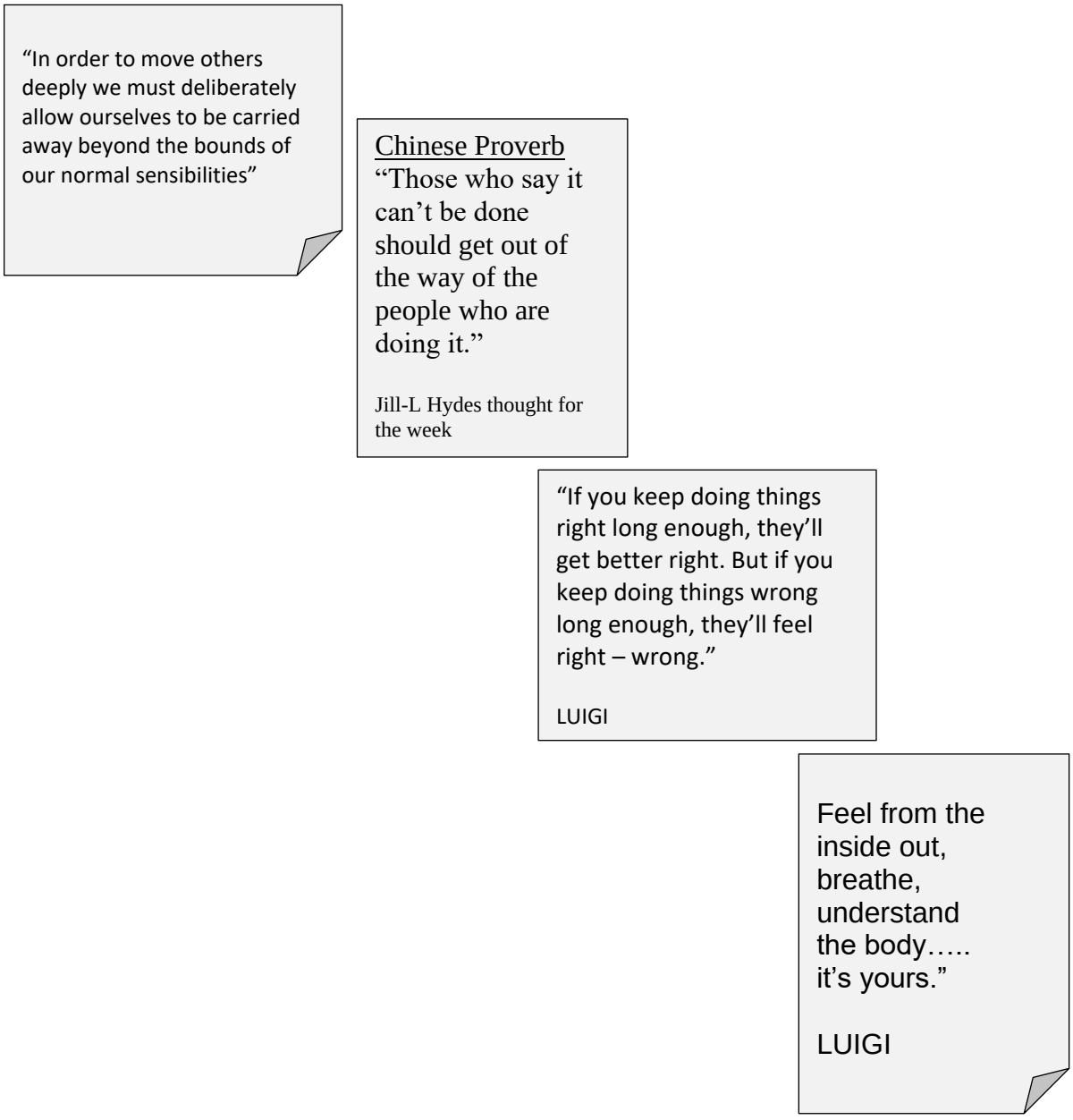


Exhibit 1.3
Blog Excerpts

Document
2014

An online blog was set up during the ethnographic fieldwork residency at ArtsEd. The aim-to bring the student voice to the fore, allowing contributors to document their experiences of training, making choices as to when and how they formatted their thoughts–was explained and discussed during tutorials with each year group and received a keen and enthusiastic response from students. Over the two months of the residency, however, (despite verbal encouragement) only one student contributed to the blog, as a result raising pertinent questions about time pressure, work focus, student interests and concerns about documenting feelings and opinions.

Waking up unhappy

NOVEMBER 19, 2014

It's Wednesday week 8 of the first term and I have to be honest, I thought today was going to be tough from the off. Had a few personal things with a friend back home and just felt utterly exhausted. Had jazz first thing which I thought would be awful and it didn't kickstart anything anytime soon, however, by the end I was feeling a bit more energised and so getting a little more out of the lesson – the next 2 were okay but I still didn't take much from them as if like to have. We had a lunchtime rehearsal which was quite productive for myself and the lesson so-so. I managed to perk up for the remainder of the day and take a lot more out of the last 2 lessons but I just wish I managed to take everything I could from all 6 lessons rather than only 2. I guess not everyday can be a good day :)

Week 8 – just finish already!

NOVEMBER 21, 2014

Harder and harder and harder and for god's sake I need Christmas break! Feel pretty naff and a cross between not achieving anything and just getting weaker – safe to say it's not been the best week here at artsed … I want to go onwards and upwards but I'm stuck in a stalemate – can I have a 3 day weekend please?!

"[Most drawn to]
the student blog. I found it incredibly sad, not only that only one person responded, but also the sheer exhaustion experienced by the student. Related to presence of Janine exercising well."

(*SJB* participant)

Figure 27: *SJB*, The Shard. (Andy Machals, 2015).

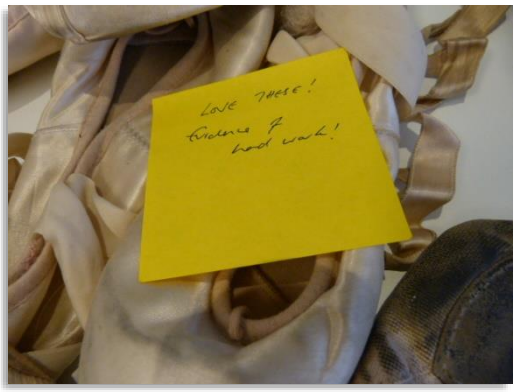
Moving from the neatly arranged Green table, the yellow floor arrows direct you to another table…

- Red table / Personal archive / Past

Figures 28 & 29: *SJB*, NUI Galway (2015).

Exhibit 2
Ballet Shoes

Ten pairs of ballet shoes, worn between 1996 and 2012.



Figures 30-32: *SJB*, Exhibit 2, *Ballet Shoes*.

"Stand in first position…" encourages Jill, the wonderfully patient shop assistant, clasping my twelve-year old hand in hers, "and I want you to slowly, really slowly, rise right up on to your toes." Thanks to my ever generous and supportive Mum, I rarely leave Dancewell, the dance shop on Cotham Hill in Bristol, emptyhanded. A crushed velvet turquoise leotard, ultraviolet 'binbag' jazz trousers, tan Capezio boots, the latest regulation uniform. The moment my ballet teacher, Miss Sims, confirms that I am 'ready' for first pair of pointe shoes is nothing short of glorious: a rite of passage in my dancing life. Whilst numerous objects are associated with ballet, "the shoe is by far the most significant" (Medina, 2007: p.56). I lift my heels, engaging my calf muscles which have been conscientiously practising for this moment for the last ten years, rolling onto the balls of my feet and…..UP! Handcrafted by Freed, the size 3F pointe shoes are not ballet slipper pink, but more of a pale peachy-apricot. I have been chosen by these satin-clad weapons. Long before I am aware of the important sociocultural history of the ballet slipper, I endow this shoe with a quality of power. This is a shoe with a soul (Kant, 2011).

Exhibit 2.1
Miscellaneous Ephemera

A collection of personal notebooks, photographs, poems and ArtsEd college work.

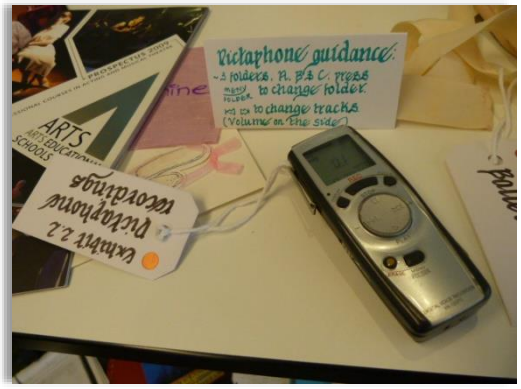
"[Most drawn to]
the memories, the paraphernalia."

(*SJB* participant)

Figures 33 to 36: *SJB*, Exhibit 2.1, *Miscellaneous Ephemera.*

Exhibit 2.2
Dictaphone recordings* / V&A performance only: *Dead Dictaphone
Audio files

The historical recordings of both verbal feedback sessions with production creatives of ArtsEd third year shows and first year singing practice to backing tracks on this dictaphone have become inaccessible, due to the device malfunctioning. A locked archive.



"[Most drawn to]
the dictaphone recordings. Felt a bit voyeuristic listen to private feedback."

(*SJB* participant)

Figure 37: *SJB*, Exhibit 2.2, *Dictaphone recordings* (later *Dead Dictaphone*).

Exhibit 2.3
Voicereel Montage
Audio file

Two minutes of material used to showcase and secure voiceover work.

Figure 38, *SJB*, Exhibit 2.3, *Voicereel Montage.*

Please listen to Audio Track 8 now:
Audio recording used for *Someday Just Began: an interactive/documented installation.* Material: Cutglass Productions, 2011.

Continuing to follow the direction of the arrows, you notice a chair. You make your way to it and sit down…

Please listen to Audio Track 9 now:
Audio recording used for *Someday Just Began: an interactive/documented installation.* Material: ArtsEd, London, 2014/2015.

Exhibit 3
Nostalgia
Audio file/performance space

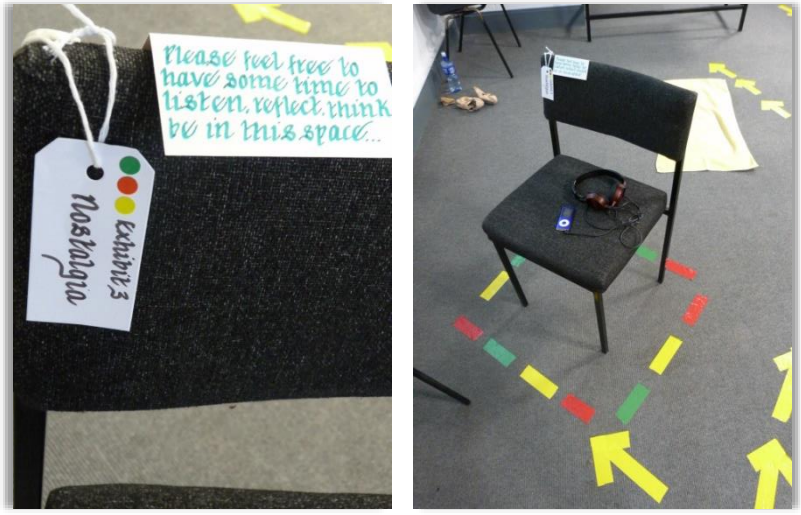


Figure 39: *SJB*, Exhibit 3, *Nostalgia.*

• Interactive FUTURE

You are (already) in the interactive future. You clocked the woman (exercising? Dancing?) when you came into this space. Confined within a taped square on the floor, she appears to be mirroring the bodies which can be seen on the footage projected onto the wall or screen in front of her. She is breathing heavily as she follows the aerobic track, driving her legs up into the air.

Exhibit 3.1
Corridor-Class∞
Audiovisual footage

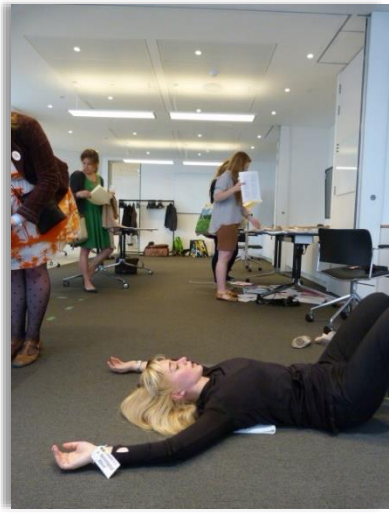
Exhibit 3.2
Performance Space
Body in space

Performing process…shifting of disciplines, space, time, people…journeying… urgent transitions…normal extremity-extreme normality…mental challenge…corporeal limits…failure…an experiment…a return.

"[Most drawn to] the dance/fitness video/performance."

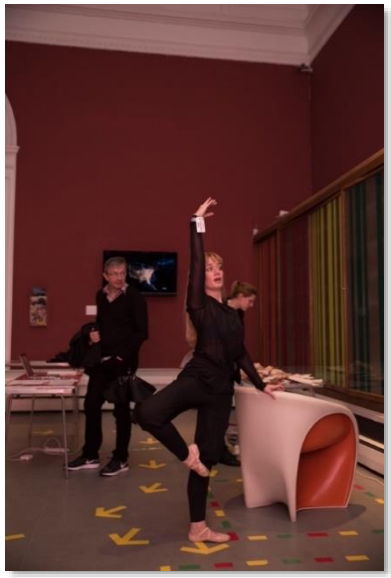
(*SJB* participant)

Please engage with Audiovisual 4 now:
Corridor-Class∞
Audiovisual footage used for *Someday Just Began: an interactive/documented installation*. Material: ArtsEd, London, 2014/2015.



"[Most drawn to]
the juxtaposition of your living body with the recordings: more of this would be great. Perhaps the space for visitors to try too?"

(*SJB* participant)



"I think highlighting the physical exhaustion in liveness – was so effective."

(*SJB* participant)

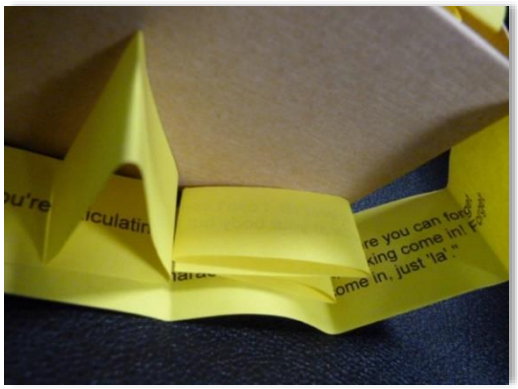
Figures 40-42: *SJB*, Exhibit 3.2, *Performance Space*. (Images 40 and 42 ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

Exhibit 3.3
Speech Square
Audio file/performance space

There are two small boxes full of folded yellow paper slips. Verbatim quotations, spoken by the ArtsEd Musical Theatre teachers during lessons, are written on the slips. The content is not documented here: to present it in this medium–outside the context of the live installation (or training) event–would be to put it at risk of being misinterpreted. More particularly, it may put *people* at risk. The exhibit is about voicing: ourselves and others; it is about the intensity of training relationships; and pedagogies of passion. In the live iterations of the installation, participants were asked to put on a pair of headphones, play ***Track 10*** (see below) and read out the quotations written on the slips.

"[Most drawn to]
the sound elements, actually
– and the yellow slips."

(*SJB* participant)



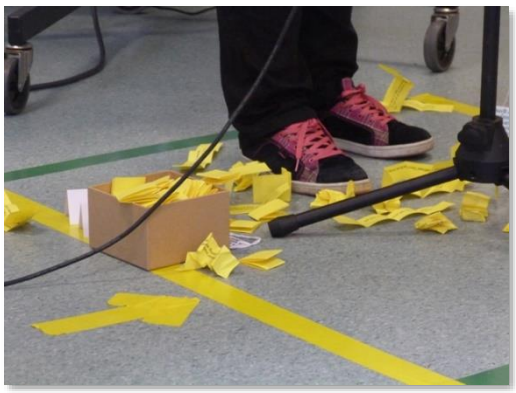


Figure 43-45: *SJB* participants interact with Exhibit 3.3, *Speech Square*.

I am observing a second year Jazz lesson at ArtsEd. The students are about to perform the *tendu* exercise, which they are expected to have practised in their own time. It is a long exercise with a significant amount of footwork and 'arm-ography'. If a student goes wrong, she may be asked to present the exercise again, alone or, possibly, alongside another student. If she makes another mistake, she must leave the class. "Get ready," Chris instructs. Just before he turns on the music, he surveys the class and there is a moment of something that seems like tacit support, as if Chris is silently willing the students to succeed. This emphatic pause between utterance and music sparks me to make a connection between Chris, the students, and the song used for the *tendu* exercise. The trainee-teacher relationships are so intense, so vital, so affective.

(ArtsEd Case Study [field notes], Diamond, November 2014).

Please listen to Audio Track 10 now:
Audio recording used for *Someday Just Began: an interactive/documented installation.* Material: ArtsEd, London, 2014/2015.

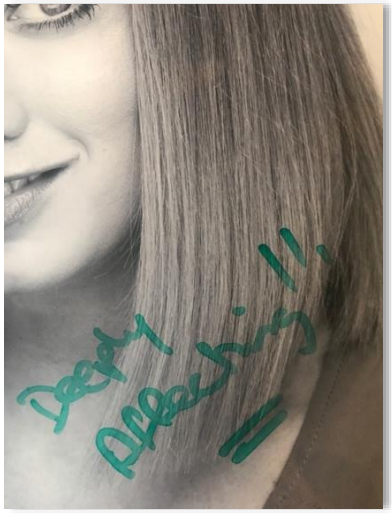
***Author's note*: Audio Track 10 has been removed in order to adhere to UK copyright law. To experience this material as intended, please download 'I Couldn't Live Without Your Love' (Petula Clark, 1996).**

Track 10 is offered to you as a gift. Relate to it in whatever way suits you in this moment and listen for as long as you like. You may wish to engage with the images below, as you listen to the track.

A final table awaits you…

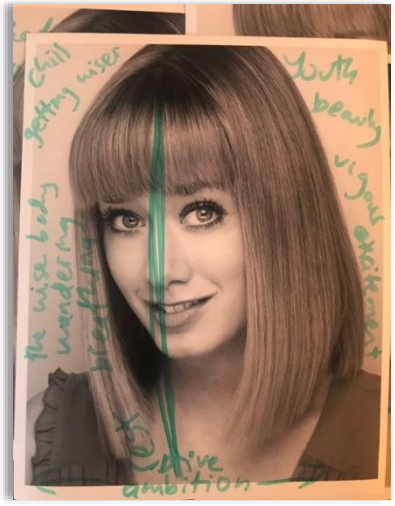
- Yellow table / Feedback/ Future

Figure 46 & 47: *SJB* Yellow table/Feedback/Future.



"The diverse elements give a fuller understanding than I think could be achieved with a formal paper."

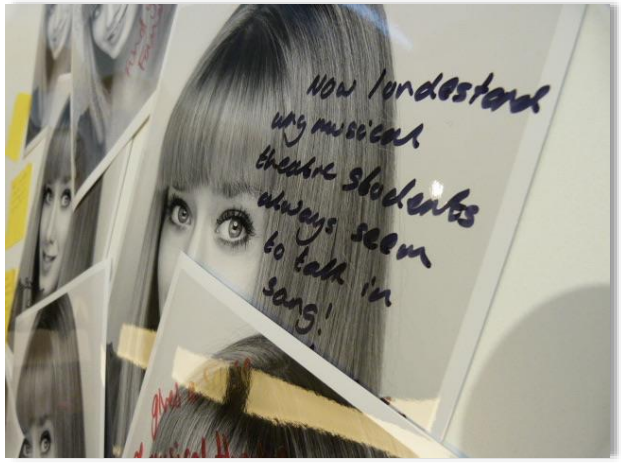
(*SJB* participant)

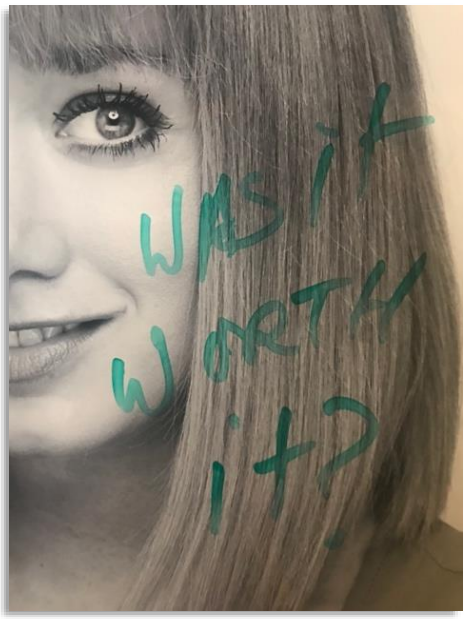


Getting us to write on your headshot was inspired! Really visually striking and is a very visual manifestation of the relationship between product and process."

(*SJB* participant)

Figure 48-51: *SJB* Yellow table/Feedback/Future.





"[Most drawn to]
1. Listening to the audio
2. Watching the screen
3. The performer."

(*SJB* participant)

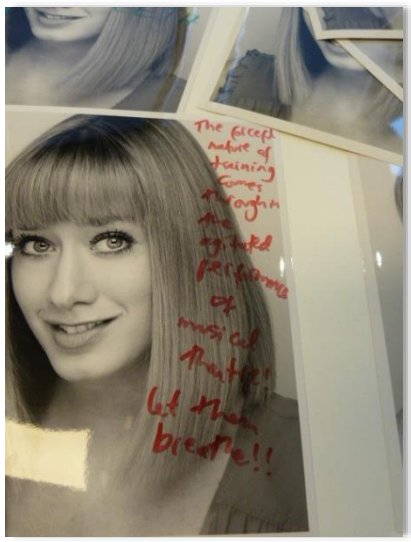
Figure 52-55: *SJB* Yellow table/Feedback/Future.

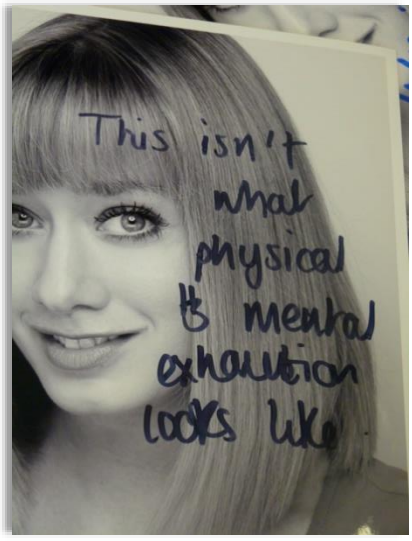
"It was a wonderful way to experience and get something of an insight into the process of training."

(*SJB* participant)

"[Have learned about] the intensity of the work. The blog extracts showed the level of frustration about physical work which I can identify with in the academic work of research."

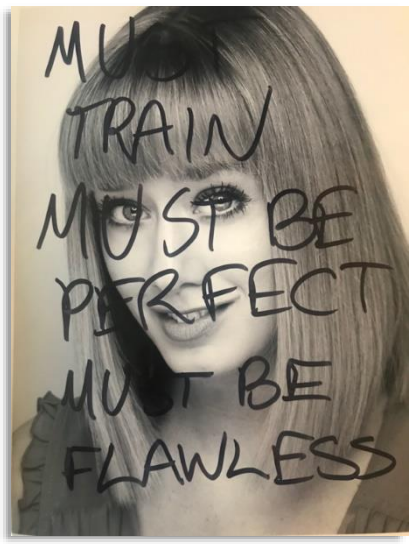
(*SJB* participant)





"I think it worked much better than a formal paper in terms of getting the experience across to the audience because of the practical element."

(*SJB* participant)



"[Most drawn to] headshots – seems so wrong to deface them! And ballet shoes!

(*SJB* participant)

Figure 56-61: *SJB* Yellow table/Feedback/Future.

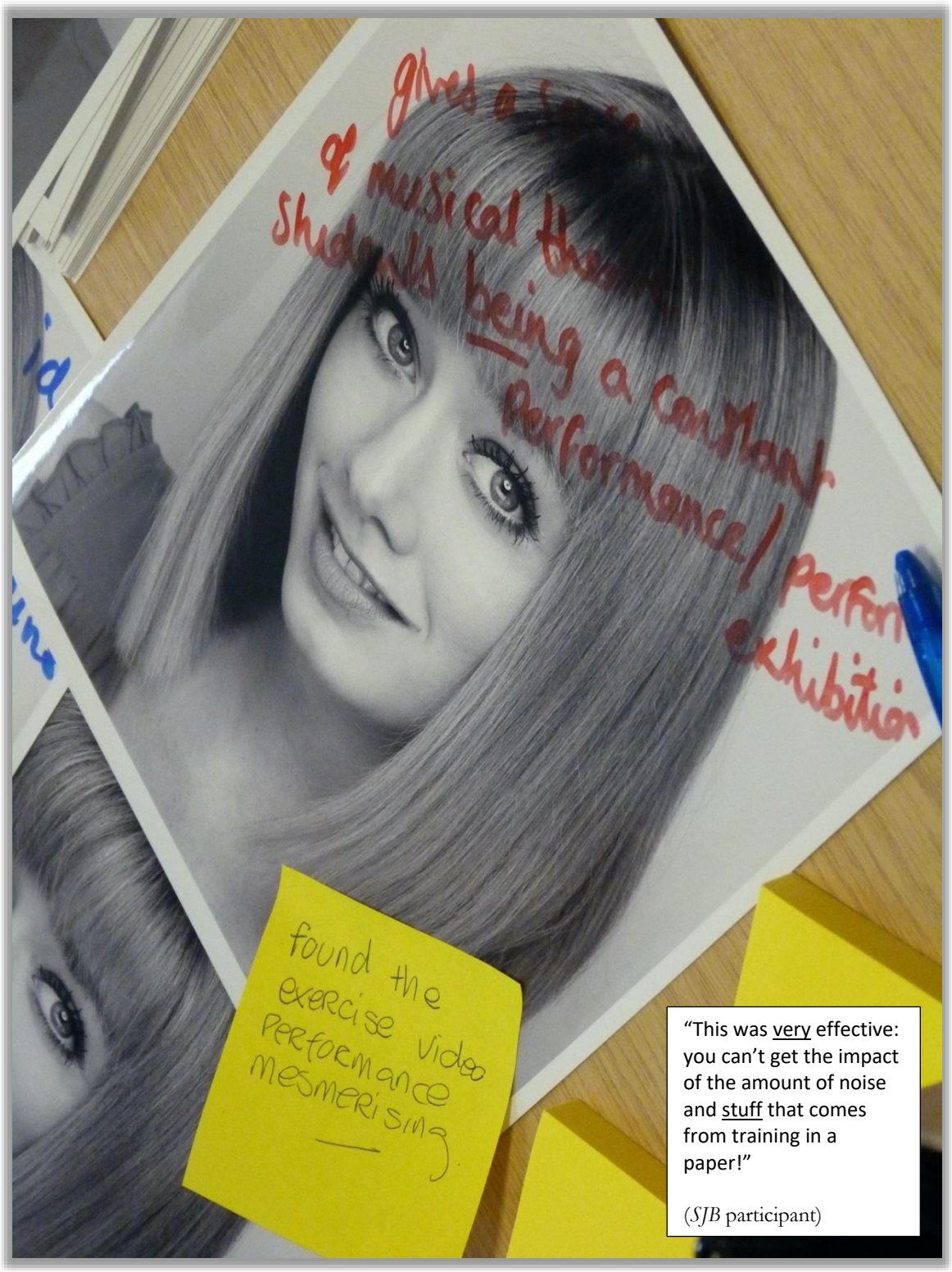


Figure 62: *SJB* Yellow table/Feedback/Future.

CONCLUSION | THE TRIPLE THREAT: ADDING NEW STRANDS TO THE STORY

The triple threat–performer and training–has now been critically storied and sensuously theorised. The aim of this thesis has been to scrutinise the triple threat (and her) training experience. What constitutes the successful triple threat performer and triple threat training? How can training be understood as a process of enculturation? How does the relationship between performer, training and industry work? How is the training process embodied and articulated and how can this experience be re-presented? What does a process of reimagining reveal about training practices past and present? I have discovered that the ArtsEd triple threat's journey of becoming transcends innate talent and skills-based learning: it is a complex, embodied, formative process of creative, critical and sociocultural conditioning that prepares the trainee for the industry culture. Examining past and present processes of ArtsEd's musical theatre training enables important conclusions to be drawn about experiencing this specific form of performer training.

Approaching the triple threat

Responding to the research problem, my complex and original qualitative research design utilised a crystallized framework, employing ethnography, narrative (autoethnography) and practice as research to build an extended case study of ArtsEd's BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course. The drivers of this research have been a passion for musical theatre and ardent dedication to live performance and education, the impact of my own experience of training as a triple threat, and a concern that, within scholarly dialogues, the voices, experiences, and practices of the triple threat trainee and training institution have been severely limited. Addressing this matter I have drawn triple threat training into the musical theatre field and discipline and, in doing so, have created–potentially–knowledge exchange with the training institutions. Thematic analysis provided a rigorous, systematic approach that I applied across six data sets consisting of a large amount of textual documentation, but also included audio and visual data. This method of analysis, along with an iterative-inductive approach allowed themes to be identified, the response to which led to interdisciplinary connections being made.

This thesis is an original contribution to the field of musical theatre in that it pays particular attention to the triple threat performer and the specificities of her training in context, using a unique methodology to explore ArtsEd's training practices and their effects. The insights gained

make a particularly important contribution to studies of the conceptualisation of the triple threat performer and training, but also extend knowledge regarding the fields of (recent) histories of training, by documenting remembered training processes; performer training, in highlighting ArtsEd's pedagogical and ethical training approaches and shifting ideology of training; and, more widely, scholarship that explores embodied practices and/or how documents perform.
While many audience members experience musical theatre performers in the moment of live performance, this research has exposed a training practice that commonly precedes the musical theatre performer's professional career, unpacking the complexities of the musical theatre performer's labour and vocation and ArtsEd's approaches to these intricacies. In addition, I have raised crucial questions about the performer-training-industry loop. Problematising the conceptualisation of the triple threat, I have made an important distinction between triple threat performer and triple threat training. Four themes have been highlighted–(a lack of) specificity, stigmatisation, separation, shifting discourses–and I have demonstrated how these aspects have contributed towards the triple threat being overlooked or misinterpreted. Until now, divergent interpretations as to the constitution of the triple threat in both specialist and general settings have resulted in a problematic ambiguity, preventing a clear understanding of the concept. I have argued that, due to the composite nature of the phenomenon and assumptions about her performance practice, the triple threat has been subject to paradoxical qualities and, consequently, devalued.

Contextualising the ArtsEd triple threat trainee in the training environment has disrupted the practitioner from the conventional theatre setting and has aimed to disassociate the reader from pictorial stereotypes which reduce the musical theatre performer to the moment of performance. Imitating the process of metamorphosis, the sensorially-intense environment of training is recognised to cocoon musical theatre students and staff within the training building as the trainee undergoes a transformative experience of physical, psychological and sociocultural conditioning in preparation for the industry. A consideration as to how creativity is located within training has surfaced the use of the term 'creative' and how methodologies derived from the megamusical can be understood to affect each element of the performer-training-industry loop. I have highlighted how creativity and the development of creativity can be recognised to function within the ArtsEd Musical Theatre programme, drawing parallels between ArtsEd dance pedagogies and models of the creative process; evidenced the use of imagery and 'future-orientated discourse' employed to support and motivate the trainee during the problem-solving process; and explained aspects of training, such as Song Workshops, which aim to nurture the

performer as creator or 'creative'. It has been imperative that the content of my analysis has responded to the thematic maps developed during the data analysis phase of this research; ergo, the creativity evidenced in Chapter 3 detailed the trainee demonstrating what can be described as tiny bits of control within fixed boundaries (in preparation for specific industry practices). However, I maintain that it is vital that our understanding of creativity within this training model is not limited to these findings alone: ongoing research in this area could usefully explore further how creativity is fostered in training, the development of creative triple threat pedagogies, and how each element of the performer-training-industry loop may approach and advance creative practice(s).

Breaking down binaries

Investigating matters of ethics in training has necessitated a knotty strand within the performer-training-industry loop to be addressed. A hidden curriculum is uncovered indicating how ArtsEd functions as a micro-industry that replicates the high stakes nature of the professional musical theatre environment: students become accustomed to high-stakes testing and are trained to embody aesthetic labour and vulnerability. Whilst aspects of this process lead to questions regarding the ethicality of the practices, I have demonstrated how a doctrine of care and a growing awareness of ethical training, alongside the nuanced pedagogies of individual teachers, balanced the factors that appeared to reproduce industry conditions. By situating the training of the past alongside the training of the present, this shift in training has been clearly marked. The *Curated Interfaces* have interrogated memories of training and experiences from within the field to create layered, multigenre and multimedia representations which engage with musical theatre training as a cognitive, physical, emotional, sensory, spiritual and embodied practice. From the outset of this research process, I embraced a reflexive approach that was all-encompassing: forgetfulness, faux pas and failures were recognised and included as "just more data" (Ellingson, 2009: p.177). This resulted in certain limitations being documented and contemplated in the main body of the thesis, with the aim of these supporting a deeper, more enlightening analysis.

Reflecting on this thesis as a whole draws attention to both underlying and explicit dichotomous or binary relationships which characterise the topic and the fields of training and industry. While classification is a natural and essential skill for humans, it can lead to binary thinking and, consequently, to problems of privilege, power, priority and superiority (Robbins, 2014: p.1). In the introduction, I highlighted issues of access experienced during the design and planning phase of this research, referring to a meeting with the course leader of a vocational musical theatre

course at an illustrious institution. Whilst it was a useful and interesting conversation, the course leader emphasised a 'you' and 'us' relationship which emphasised my position as researcher/outsider and as a graduate of a 'rival' school. In the same chapter, this 'you' or 'them' and 'us' relationship is reinforced explicitly in relation to performers and the academy in my conversation with comedian, Andi Ford, and in Chapter 1 the academic/performer binary is evidenced by successful yet self-deprecating practitioners who–feeling the need to clarify that they are not academics–belittle not only their significant and skilful physical practices but also their critical thinking skills. The first chapter also traced the problematic acting/musical theatre binary. In Chapter 3, the apparent differences between university students and vocational students are underlined within an academic setting and the cast/creative dichotomy challenged.
Binaries are foregrounded in Chapter 2 in an analysis of the training environment: I have explained the divide between the world contained within the training building and the outside world, argued the necessity for the sonic and visual dimensions of the training milieu to be examined in tandem, and illustrated the significance of the sensory dynamics both inside and outside the studio. In Chapter 4, a consideration of training and industry as high stakes calls attention to the dichotomous power relations between the audition panel/trainer/performer and the auditionee/trainee/production management.

In the introduction, I noted how my chosen framework, crystallization, rejects the art/science and quantitative/qualitative dichotomies in favour of understanding research via a qualitative continuum. In this thesis, the autoethnographic *Curated Interfaces* are positioned at each side of the ethnographic chapters and, within these, past and present training experiences have been situated alongside each other and I have explored my bifurcated role as ethnographer and ArtsEd graduate. It could be said that this format dichotomises the ethnographic textual analyses and the autoethnographic multimodal sections: yet I argue that the thesis design is multigenre and has aimed to balance (analytic and artistic) genres, the results of multiple data sets, univocality and polyvocality, and to cross temporal boundaries reflecting the characteristics of memory creatively, but clearly. Moreover, if interpreted as dichotomous, the work might be recognised to affirm both sides as equally important, necessary and true (Elbow, 1993: p.54). Moving forward, utilising a dendritic process of crystallization (Ellingson, 2009) could contribute towards knowledge about the triple threat's culture. This list of binaries is not, by any means, exhaustive: framing this thesis through lenses focusing on binaries, however, magnifies and draws attention to the ubiquitous presence of binary classification characterising the performer–training–industry loop.

Questions about the effects of binaries within the performer-training-industry loop and how, specifically, these might be challenged or reframed to support, particularly, more ethical practices are certainly worth more investigation. Extending a similar study to other institutions or locales within the performance industry would enable an understanding as to whether or not the pervasive themes developed in this research represent common aspects of the triple threat training experience or, indeed, vocational training and industry experiences more broadly. The timeliness and relevance of this research is reflected in the surfacing of issues of training ethics, such as Cush Jumbo's recent description of her own experience of training at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. In a podcast presented by David Tennant, the British actor and writer discussed the approach with which she was met at Central:

> Some of you will live, but most of you will die. Some of you are good, but most of you are shit…and if you are good, we're gonna make you realise how shit your good bits are and you're just gonna take it, 'cos you're paying us… … …everything was a brick wall and everything was wrong with me… … What I wish that somebody had said to me back then was everything that people are teaching you here is a tool that you should definitely learn and understand, but that may not be what works with you. Don't try to be somebody else. (2020)

Jumbo's account reinforces a training outlook characterised by dichotomies. Furthermore, Jumbo recalls her inability to accept an alumni fellowship due to hearing "so many awful stories [from students], too many awful stories for it not to be true…about stuff that was going on there" (ibid.). It is my conviction that by finding modes through which to represent, share and question stories of vocational training, training processes will be better understood and effectively developed.

The story goes on

In this crystallized thesis exploring the triple threat performer and triple threat training, I have produced engaged research (Ellingson, 2009) which is able to move beyond the confines of the academy. Highlighting that the labour undertaken by the performer in the moment of live performance is only one aspect of her complex practice, this research conceptualises the performer-training-industry loop as a significant force in which the three interrelated components operate: I have drawn on all three elements but have focused in this thesis on the ArtsEd performer and training. The results of the complicated, creative processes which shape the musical theatre training at ArtsEd have enabled the school to establish a reputation for producing triple threat performers of an exceptionally high-calibre. The school's progressive pedagogies and shifting ethos makes possible the development of highly specific,

superdisciplinary triple threat training. This thesis has evidenced an evolving training model which demonstrates a newfound, growing commitment to ethical responsibility and accountability in relation to its practices. The imprint of a once dogmatic training regime remains etched on the bodies and minds of many graduates, and this document functions as a palimpsest of training histories. Will changing practices of musical theatre training result in the reconfiguration of the elements within the performer-training-industry loop? How might conformity and discipline be addressed in training pedagogies? Can ArtsEd, using its power in the present and its holistic approach to training, effectuate a diversified future industry in which discriminatory practices are overturned and the triple threat performer is valued and empowered?

To enable a detailed, crystallized analysis of the ArtsEd BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course, the scope of this thesis was limited to the study of one institution's musical theatre programme, but attended to a number of past and present training experiences. The iterative-inductive approach allowed the research process to unfold in response to the broad question: "What is it that is going on here?" (Goffman, 1974: p.8) with specific research questions developing and being clarified organically. Contextualising the triple threat performer within the setting of training has made clear that the enclosed nature of training manifests and magnifies the potent sensory environment and particular sociocultural norms, pedagogical methods, ethical approaches and intense relationships. I have argued that these aspects are central to the training experience, equally as important as technical, skills-based learning. This thesis has extended Symonds' (2014) argument that the triple threat and her practice may be defined by stratified layers or dynamics. Augmenting the dynamics that Symonds claims are used to create and characterise musical theatre–"music, narrative, physicality, relationships and effect, and *particularly* collaboration, integration and immersion" (p.8)–and adding memory, feeling, embodiment and multisensoriality, I have created an original methodological framework revealing the process of training in vicarious experiences, tacit narratives and sensory perceptions. Through multiple modes of representation, these elements intersect studio pedagogies. In this thesis I have sought to "show" and "tell" (Ellis and Bochner, 2016; Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011) the training experience, creating a performing document that offers the reader an opportunity to pattern a unique interaction in which they are able to sensorially engage with the various strata.

Crystallization does not seek to make claims of generalisation (Ellingson, 2009). Whilst I would agree that this research lacks the "statistical-probabilistic generalizability" (Smith, 2018: p.138)

commonly applied to quantitative research, it is useful to consider how the results of this study might relate to different kinds of generalisation. Meta-ethnography (Noblit and Hare, 1988), thematic synthesis (Thomas and Harden, 2008), transferability (Tracy, 2010), generativity (Barone and Eisner, 2012), naturalistic generalizability (Stake: 1978, 1995) or representational generalisation (Lewis et al., 2014), and analytical generalization (Polit and Beck, 2010) all offer possible avenues through which the findings of this thesis could be enabled to move beyond the individual case, whilst remaining committed to crystallization's epistemological assumption that knowledge is partial, subjective and constructed.

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Background

Vocational musical theatre training continues to thrive as the predominantly chosen route by performers with the aim of gaining work within the professional performance industry. Training has also been the subject of a number of recent debates in the academic sphere. This growing dialogue features a diverse range of voices, including those of academics, conservatoire and drama school teachers and trainers, practitioners, and other industry professionals.

The BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course is considered, by industry professionals: casting directors, agents, creatives, and performers, to be one of the most renowned vocational musical theatre training programmes in the UK. The fieldwork carried out at ArtsEd will form a component of my PhD research. The residencies at the school will allow the rigours that underpin musical theatre training to be identified and explored, providing one possible mode of looking at what has been, until now, an elusive form of training that has evaded documentation.

Research procedures

- A period of time will be spent observing first, second and third year classes. A selection of staff will be interviewed and students will be asked to contribute to an online blog.
- Fieldnotes will be recorded in writing and, when permitted, photographs taken and video footage recorded.
- Staff and students are not required to prepare anything prior to the fieldwork. Methods of observation will not be intrusive or interfere with the training process. Students are asked to contribute to the online blog during break times, lunchtimes, or out of college hours.
- The individual behaviours of the participants (both physical and verbal) will be recorded (to build a picture of the creative, social and cultural environment). Interview and technological data (student blog, photographs, video footage) will also be collected for analysis.
- The first residency will take place from Monday 6th October until Friday 21st November 2014. A second residency will be undertaken in the summer of 2015.
- The online blog will bring the student voice to the fore, allowing them to document their experiences of training, making choices as to when they contribute to the blog and how they format their thoughts. In interviews, staff will be offered the opportunity to reflect on their creative and pedagogical practice, and comment upon the specificity of the training offered by ArtsEd.
- Participants have the right to withdraw from this study at any time, without having to give a reason. Please see below for further information in regard to this.

Data handling

- For the purposes of this study, only the first names of students will be used.
- Staff may choose to remain anonymous.
- Personal data in the form of photographs and audiovisual recordings of the participant may be used in the public domain (e.g. presentations or journal articles).
- The data will be controlled in accordance with the research procedures of the University of Bristol.

Other information

- If you have any further questions about this study, please contact Janine E Cowell (jc12392@bristol.ac.uk | 07825 577663).
- Any further concerns relating to your participation in this study may be directed to the Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee, via the Research Ethics Coordinator, Liam McKervey (Liam.Mckervey@bristol.ac.uk | 0117 3317472).

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Background

Vocational musical theatre training continues to thrive as the predominantly chosen route by performers with the aim of gaining work within the professional performance industry. Training has also been the subject of a number of recent debates in the academic sphere. This growing dialogue features a diverse range of voices, including those of academics, conservatoire and drama school teachers and trainers, practitioners, and other industry professionals.

The BA (Hons) Musical Theatre course is considered, by industry professionals: casting directors, agents, creatives, and performers, to be one of the most renowned vocational musical theatre training programmes in the UK. The Practice as Research workshops carried out will form a component of my PhD research. The workshops will allow the rigours that underpin musical theatre training to be remembered and (re-) explored, providing one possible mode of looking at what has been, until now, an elusive form of training that has evaded documentation.

Research procedures

- Participants will take part in practical workshops (held at Chiswick Theatre Arts and ArtsEd).
- The individual behaviours of the participants (both physical and verbal) will be recorded.
- Interview and technological data (documentation, photographs, video footage) will also be collected for analysis.
- The first workshop will take place on Sunday 26th April 2015. Further workshops will be undertaken in October 2015.
- The workshops will bring the graduate voice to the fore, allowing participants to recall and document their experiences of training, making choices as to how they format their thoughts.
- Participants have the right to withdraw from this study at any time, without having to give a reason. Please see below for further information in regard to this.

Data handling

- For the purposes of this study, only the first names of participants will be used.
- Personal data in the form of photographs and audiovisual recordings of the participant may be used in the public domain (e.g. presentations or journal articles).
- The data will be controlled in accordance with the research procedures of the University of Bristol.

Other information

- If you have any further questions about this study, please contact Janine E Cowell (jc----------@bristol.ac.uk | ----- ----------).
- Any further concerns relating to your participation in this study may be directed to the Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee, via the Research Ethics Coordinator, Liam McKervey (----------@bristol.ac.uk | ---- ----------).

Department of Theatre
Janine E Cowell
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University of BRISTOL

CONSENT FORM

The archiving actor in training and beyond: from raw talent to 'triple threat' (memory) machine

This research begins to consider vocational musical theatre training. Practice as Research workshops with ArtsEd graduates will allow performers who trained at ArtsEd (but who are not current students) to contribute to the project. The first workshop seeks to identify the ways in which training is embodied and remembered (physically and mentally), and the second sets up an opportunity to investigate a return to the ArtsEd building, as well as enabling training archives to be revisited and reflected upon.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge

HAVE YOU:	**YES**	**NO**
• been given information explaining about the study?	☐	☐
• had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	☐	☐
• received satisfactory answers to all questions you asked?	☐	☐
• received enough information about the study for you to make a decision about your participation?	☐	☐

DO YOU UNDERSTAND:
that you are free to withdraw from the study and free to withdraw your data prior to final consent

• at any time?	☐	☐
• without having to give a reason for withdrawing?	☐	☐

I hereby fully and freely consent to my participation in this study

Participant's signature: ..... Date: .....
Name in BLOCK letters: .....

If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study please direct them to the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee, via Liam McKervey, Research Ethics Co-ordinator (Tel: ---- ---------- | Email: ----------@bristol.ac.uk).

Faculty of Arts
Committee for Research Ethics

University of Bristol Faculty of Arts, 3-5 Woodland Road
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ol
BS8
1TB
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Ms Janine Cowell
University of
Bristol
Department of Drama: Theatre, Film,
Television Cantocks Close
Bristol
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03rd October, 2014 Dear Ms Cowell

Re: 12341 – The archiving actor in training and beyond: From raw talent to 'triple threat' (memory) machine.

Thank you for responding to the issues raise as per our letter dated 03.10.14. The Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee Chair has reviewed your response and I am pleased to confirm that the chair has granted full ethical approval for the above named study.

Please do consult us in the event of any unexpected ethical issues arising during the research process in order to find the quickest possible resolution or seek approval of proposed measures to resolve the issues. Good luck with your research.

Yours
sincerely
Liam
McKervey
Research Ethics
Coordinator pp

Professor Mark Horton,
Faculty Research Ethics
Officer, Faculty of Arts

Appendix 5

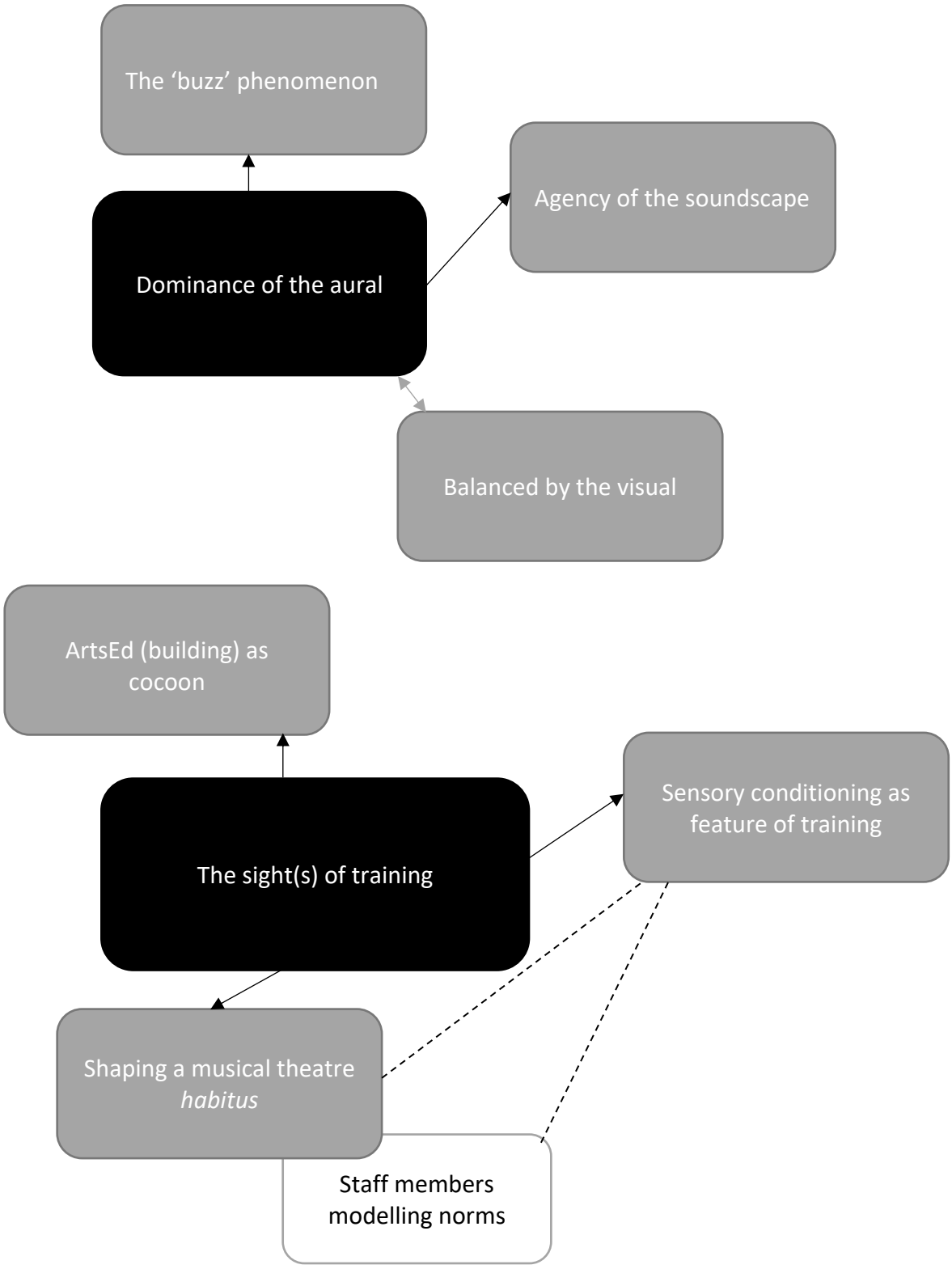

Figure 63: Candidate overarching themes, themes and subthemes: Chapter 2